

HOW TO COPE WITH A BRUTAL WORLD

BY ANUBHAV SRIVASTAVA



DEDICATED TO

**The Future Generations Arriving in This Brutal World
(including my reincarnation, just in case I am forced to
come back!)**

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READ THIS FIRST

This book was never really written to be a part of the bestseller rat race. It was written to change the right person's life.

If you feel your friends, family, colleagues or people around you in general can benefit from reading this book, feel free to share.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



My name is Anubhav Srivastava, and I have been a Business Coach, Keynote Speaker, and Trainer for over a DECADE.

I can help bring change in organizations through **COMPREHENSIVE LONG TERM** Online Training Programs conducted live via Video Conferencing, for your various teams, in the crucial areas of having a Healthy and Highly effective Mindset, Sales and Negotiation, Teamwork and Productivity, Leadership and Innovation, and finally Confidence and Communication.

This program will solve every issue you have with training your team on the Most Important skills that improve business performance

ALL OF THESE are areas that DIRECTLY Impact Your Profits and are essential for the sustained success of any team! These Programs can be short term or Long-Term depending on your requirements.

I am can also deliver highly entertaining, engaging and impactful short term training workshops and keynote speeches.

Furthermore, I am also available for high level, executive coaching, and have pre-recorded programs in various areas that will help your team become the best they can be.

So, who is Anubhav Srivastava anyway?

- Trained/coached/consulted over 90 organizations and 19 Industries with over a decade of experience.
 - I have coached participants from some of the largest corporations and Multinational companies with a global presence. I have also personally coached CEOs of top companies and am a ghostwriter for the Chairman of a Venture Capitalist Backed Billion Dollar company. I have also spoken to a lot of smaller companies across a wide range of industries and dealt with all management levels.
 - I have provided my services across a wide range of sectors as Insurance, Finance, IT, Media, Education Services, Construction & Real Estate, Power Generation, Hospitality, Chartered Accountancy, Pharma, Automotive, Telecom, Legal Services, Equipment Manufacturing, Food, Fertilizers, TV Broadcasting etc.
 - Creator of one of the top ranked Inspirational Movies on YouTube worldwide, Carve Your Destiny, having more than 2.6 million views
 - Featured several times in India's Media and also on BBC Radio
 - Written for top Business Magazines and Websites
 - Blog featured as one of the top 100 Productivity Blogs in The World by Feedspot.com

Also the Author of the much loved Book, Unlearn: A Practical Guide to Business & Life

- Master's Degree from University of Leicester, UK. Bachelors from Western International University, USA and schooling from St. Columba's School, Delhi
- My complete credentials are visible in my WEBSITE link given below. You may also take a look at my YouTube channel for reference.

Website: <http://anubhavsrivastava.com/about-anubhav> (If the link does not open due to heavy traffic, please try after some time)

Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anubhav_Srivastava

Link to my inspirational movie Carve Your Destiny with over 2.6 million views :-
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgVrCtOhqjo>

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Table of Contents

READ THIS FIRST	4
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	5
Why Should You Be Reading This Book?	9
Many times, your beliefs are not always your own.....	17
WHY I WILL (HOPEFULLY) NEVER BE A BLIND “FOLLOWER” of ANYONE	18
Your First DUTY is towards yourself	20
RETHINKING HONESTY	23
RETHINKING “HARD WORK”	26
DECIMATING GUILT	32
The 5 “Modes” You Need to Have a Truly Fulfilling Life.....	35
A Word on Benny “The Time Table” Franklin	40
You CANNOT Sustain what you don’t enjoy.....	44
The Art of Effortless Doing	46
The Search and Obsession For FAME: The Most OVERRATED Human Desire	58
Why “Societal Respect” is ALSO an Illusion.....	72
How to Stop Depending on Others for Happiness – The PHILOSOPHY OF EPICTETUS	80
What Science tells us about mental well-being.....	86
OVERCOMING MAYA or “The Matrix”	96
The Root Cause of ALL Pain in Our Lives, and How to Tame It	131
How “Maya” clouds genuine contributions in the eyes of society.	141
NEVER FORGET THIS IF YOU WISH TO LIVE IN PEACE	148
Accept that little is under your actual control and finally come to terms with it.	150
How to Use the 4 Paths of Yoga to make your lives a LITTLE LESS PAINFUL.	159
How Controlling Parents Keep Children trapped in MAYA.....	166
How to Cope with The Ultimate Truth of Life	181

Why Should You Be Reading This Book?

"What disturbs and depresses young people is the hunt for happiness on the firm assumption that it must be met with in life. From this arises constantly deluded hope and so also dissatisfaction."

The life of every individual, viewed as a whole and in general, and when only its most significant features are emphasized, is really a tragedy; but gone through in detail it has the character of a comedy."

— Arthur Schopenhauer (*My Buddy Schop*)

The societal rat race is the single biggest cause of anxiety and sadness in our lives. Societal training, right from your childhood, gives you tremendous ambition but no reliable way to fulfill that ambition. It gives you tremendous desire but no way to truly satiate that desire. It gives you tremendous thirst, but it gives you barely any water to fulfill that thirst.

And for the rare few that do actually happen to achieve it, **ask them if they are genuinely happy or at peace in the long term?**

The one who loses is also unhappy and the one who wins is also "unhappy."

Cicero, who was a statesman from ancient Rome had these interesting words to say about happiness.

"No one in existence is not miserable, no one is truly happy. those who dare call man "happy" or "blessed" are naïve."

About kings, he said – The king faces constant threats of war, devastation of his territories, massacres of his people, assassination threats.

Even when the king is not at war, he becomes his own source of anxiety because he is constantly thinking about who is scheming against him, creating alliances to increase his power, increasing taxes to increase his wealth and constantly distracted by greed, which allows him no peace for himself.

About the poor he wrote. "The poor on the other hand are vulnerable to every possible trauma and tragedy. They have to endure poverty, hunger, disrespect, aggressions, taxes, military disasters—basically, every conceivable misery."

I think it is safe to say:

No one's life is perpetually peaceful.
No one is life is free of pain.

On top of that, much of what you are taught about it is PLAIN wrong and **this sets people out on the wrong path from the very beginning.**

After all, if your teacher teaches the foundational math in a wrong way, how can you understand algebra, geometry and trigonometry correctly later on?

In fact, I am convinced the biggest danger to society is not some weapon. It is actually an influential teacher/guide/authority figure with an extremely huge audience, who is actually a fool and doesn't even know it!

He or she can lead people down a wrong path that they can't recover from for years, and sometimes a lifetime.

Unfortunately, I believe this world has countless such so called teachers and authority figures and I have personally been misled by many such figures. You will be introduced to some of them later on in this book 😊

**Unlearning their nonsense was the point of the first book I wrote:
Unlearn.**

This book though is the next rung of the ladder and talks about my philosophies about life as far as I understand it till now, from MULTIPLE ANGLES.

Because life is not one dimensional, life is multidimensional.

You can't just choose to breathe and think it is enough to survive life. You need to eat, drink and get appropriate shelter and heat and so on. Because, if you mess up even in one area, you are dead!

Similarly, just being great at your job is not enough if you are terrible at managing money, health, have no spiritual grounding or are way too naive. Sooner or later, an extreme imbalance in any area will come back to bite you.

That's the objective of the book, to help you with multidimensional UNDERSTANDING of how things work that I believe is absolutely crucial to survive this brutal world.

Why Even Geniuses Should Be Reading This Book

There is an anecdote involving Isaac Newton and his dogs.

So, the story goes like this - Newton had two dogs. One was a big dog and the other was a smaller dog.

But the dogs always kept creating issues because they wanted to go outside and play and so Newton had to get up and let them out when they wanted to go out, or let them in when they wanted to come in.

So, he thought of a solution and called the carpenter. He told the Carpenter - "I want you to make TWO holes in the door. Make a smaller one for the smaller dog and make a larger one for the larger dog."

The Carpenter thought for a moment and then responded by saying - "But won't the smaller dog also be able to go through the larger hole?!!"

At that time Newton realized his error and was surprised that even a scientist like him couldn't think of a simple solution.

SO why should even the super smart should be reading this book?

Because sometimes, you may know the secrets of the universe, but you may lack the common sense to be able to survive in the world.

A Disclaimer: First Things First

The brutal truth is that you need at least some luck and hope that luck stays with you throughout your life.

That's the brutal truth, no matter what the positive thinkers say.

You don't choose what family you are born in, which era you are born in, which macroeconomic environment you grow up in, your mental aptitude, your special talents, which random situations that come to you that alter the trajectory of your life, etc.

So, I can't help you **with the luck you encounter in life**. But I can say this, the more "right information" you consume, the more you will be in a position to take sensible decisions, which improve the chances of you getting luckier. If nothing else, they definitely help you avoid bad luck to a certain degree.

BUT, a huge problem is that your thought process is ALSO a part of your luck. It is literally impossible to change your mindset if you just can't see that your mindset is the problem!

I know people who are almost senior citizens but still lack basic common sense.

I know people who have had to literally bury their own children, and still haven't learnt a thing about changing their ways.

Unfortunately, every living being is ultimately a prisoner of their own mind. They can only rarely, if ever, truly break free from the limits their mental aptitude, innate nature and level of self-awareness imposes upon them.

If your thought process is too different, this book will be of no help. Maybe in time you will have experiences that will change the way you think and then you may be ready, but it's also possible that you will never be ready.

Unfortunately, this applies to most people.

There is a story of a sage who also had supernatural powers to influence the cosmos.

The emperor summoned him and pointed to a particular star in the sky.

"Can you remove that star?", asked the emperor.

The sage said "Yes."

"Remove that star then", said the emperor.

The sage said "Okay." He looked at the star, closed his eyes, concentrated and then finally opened his eyes again.

"The star is removed."

"Removed?" asked the emperor. The emperor looked at the sky, but the star was still twinkling brightly.

Everyone else in the court also continued to see the star twinkling.

"Why are you lying? The star is still there!"

The sage responded that he was not lying and he had indeed removed the star.

The king got extremely angry. He thought the sage was ridiculing him and the king decided to make an example out of him.

In front of the entire court, he had the sage beheaded.

Everyone laughed at the lunatic sage whose lunacy/lies had resulted him getting beheaded.

A few hundred years went by and an astronomer was looking in the skies through his telescope. Suddenly, in front of his eyes, a star he was looking at vanished

Other scientists came in and investigated the whole episode. They were surprised. The star had literally disappeared.

It was the same star that the king had ordered the disappearance of and the sage made it happen!

But because it was hundreds of light years away, it took hundreds of years for light from the star to vanish!

The sage had indeed done what the king asked him to do. But because of their ignorance, the king and the crowd did not realize what had happened and the sage was beheaded.

The sage died because he only had power over the cosmos, not over the foolish majority of humanity, who had him killed.

The lesson is 1) Don't try to waste your time convincing the fools. They don't have common sense, but they often have enough power to make your life hell.

2) Sometimes, the majority is so brainwashed with ignorance that it takes hundreds of years for them to finally "get it."

If you still steadfastly belong to the whole "Hard work conquers all" cult, you might as well stop reading now, because you are not my reader.

To be my reader, you have to be TIRED of the nonsense the world feeds you.

You have to be in tremendous pain, agony and disillusionment from the societal script handed to you since your childhood, that has clearly not worked as well everyone said it would

Only if you are in that tremendous pain and looking for a NEW PATH that rejects useless conventional wisdom fed to you, will this be useful to you.

And if you are indeed at that stage, the NEW PATH I suggest in these pages may literally change your life.

How You Should Be Reading This Book?

The book may seem “dense” with one uncommon idea after another, because every single thing I have written is based on what has personally improved my life in multiple areas, even if it goes completely against what the modern world brainwashes you to believe.

But if you find this book of value, make sure you reread it 4 to 5 times.

The first reading is just to shock you and deprogram you, and maybe make you laugh.

The real absorption begins in the second and third reading

By, the way, NONE of my philosophies are set in stone. They are only good for you as long as they give you a peaceful life, if you see consistent evidence to the contrary, you are absolutely free to reject them and believe something else.

In fact, if you are consistently open minded, it is quite possible that every few years, your view of life will change. The landscape will keep changing as you keep moving forward in life.

Imagine you are in a desert. You may see a lake in the horizon and upon reaching it you may realize it is just a mirage. **DO not steadfastly stick to the belief that it is a lake.**

Recognize it as a mirage and move on, and warn others if you can! Life beliefs are no different! Do not stick to them if they are no longer working for you!

Chanakya, the ancient Indian statesman/philosopher said an interesting thing. He said - **“Influence the greedy by money, the arrogant by submissiveness, the fool by preaching and the learned by telling him the reality.”**

If you are still choosing to read, it means you are learned or open to the truth, so I am going to tell you the reality, or at least the version of reality that has worked for me.

If I am successful at conveying it, writing this book was worth it.

One last thing before we move on

Remember, a fire needs a spark, oxygen and fuel to get started.

I am going to give you the spark but I can't give you the oxygen and the fuel to create the fire.

You need to bring your own fuel and have enough oxygen around you.

In my own life this book would probably not have meant anything to me ten years ago, because I was in a different frame of mind and I hadn't had yet had the experiences that would shape my thinking the way it is today. I was not ready. I did not have all the conditions to create a fire.

The book may not be useful to you at 20 but maybe life changing at 35. Or it may change your life at 20 or maybe at 60 or maybe never at all. The big question is are you READY?

"Even with a good teacher, the knowledge of the Self cannot be gained unless the heart of the disciple is open and ready for the Truth. Hence both the teacher and taught must be wonderful." - Katha Upanishad

Many times, your beliefs are not always your own

When I was a kid, I was often told a proverb in school textbooks and by most of the elders. **The proverb was “Kaal kare so aaj kar, jo aaj kare so ab, pal me parlay hoyegi, bahuri karega kab.”**

This literally translates to – What is to be done tomorrow, do it today. What is to be done today, do it now. If the end of the world happens in a moment, when will you get a chance to do things?

My only query to this as a kid, which I still don't have the answer is: If the end of the world is to happen in a moment anyway, why should I bother doing irrelevant things I clearly don't want to do? Because if I wanted to do them, I would have already done them.

You may find this observation funny, but here is something funnier – Doing irrelevant things we don't want to do is exactly what most of us are doing all our lives anyway.

Many of things you believe to be true (although, not all) are actually a result of propaganda and brainwashing, regardless of where you live and which era you live in, at least since modern humans started living in organized societies. **In other words, it is information that is not necessarily accurate but somebody with control and influence believes that everyone else should believe it anyway.**

There is a phenomenon in nature where some ants keep climbing on top of grass blades despite falling off constantly, it may seem like “persistence” but actually there is no benefit to the ant itself, **it often ends up getting eaten by Sheep eating the grass.**

So why is the ant doing it? Its brain is being manipulated a flatworm that needs to be in the gut of sheep to reproduce effectively. **By commanding the ant to end up as Sheep Dinner** by being on top of grass blades that Sheep will inevitably eat, the parasite has improved its own reproductive success. **The real benefit is to the parasite and not the ant.**

Similarly, there is another parasite called Toxoplasma that can only reproduce inside the intestine of cats. It gets into rats and takes control of a rat's brain to avoid fearing cats and thus it ends up getting eaten by the cat. There is no benefit to the rat, but there is a huge benefit to the parasite.

Remember, many of the things you are taught by society, whether in terms of the typical formal education, encouragements of **participating in the rat race or any other collective beliefs, don't actually serve you any purpose, it may serve the system influencing you**, but you are just like rat being brainwashed to end up as cat dinner. The question is do you want to be a rat?

WHY I WILL (HOPEFULLY) NEVER BE A BLIND "FOLLOWER" of ANYONE

TO be fair, there are countless people, real life mentors, real life anti-mentors, real life positive and negative experiences, countless thinkers and writers and people from diverse fields, added with my own experiences since the time I have a memory that have shaped my world view.

BUT it does not mean I am a blind follower of ANY of them.

The moment you become a blind follower OF ANYONE, you lose your ability to question and the moment you lose your ability to question, you are doomed.

There is no one philosophy that is absolutely right. To buy into a group is to buy into an ideology and once you buy into an ideology you are no longer independent. **Your mind stops functioning, only doing what the group tells you to do.**

Bruce Lee developed Jeet Kune do because he realized, no single school of martial arts was correct and all were constrained by their own ideologies and not necessarily what actually worked best in a fight.

Life is also a “daily fight” in a way and if you close yourself to ideas that are actually useful and keep using what doesn’t work just because a group says that is the right thing to do, you will often end up doing more harm than good.

Once, under the compulsion of a particular situation, I ended up in a cult gathering, even though I didn’t want to be there.

There were two people “on stage.” One was a priest and the other was a “possessed” individual.

The priest was asking the spirit to leave the possessed guy. But the spirit was being a stubborn guest and refusing to leave the gentleman. Eventually, all of this was too much for me and I left the room after making up an excuse.

An hour later, the SAME possessed man was just gossiping with a friend and happily drinking tea! I thought to myself, **how can a spirit give you a tea break? Then I realized maybe the spirit itself needed a bathroom break?**

This isn’t the humorous bit though; **the truly funny part is everyone in that gathering truly believed this spectacle!**

In another meticulously designed experiment, researchers explored how individuals react to a potential hazard when influenced by the behavior of a group. The setup involved filling a room with smoke, not enough to cause harm, but certainly enough to cause concern.

The twist? Out of ten people in the room, only one was an actual test subject, unaware of the true nature of the experiment. The other nine were actors, briefed to downplay the situation.

As the room gradually filled with smoke, these actors did not respond. Crucially, however, they remained seated and continued working on their questionnaires, portraying normalcy despite the thickening smoke.

The real participant's reactions were the focal point: when surrounded by the seemingly unconcerned actors, they remarkably often mimicked this behavior, ignoring the instinct to evacuate or report the danger, even though it could have been a FIRE.

This observation was different when the REAL participants found themselves alone in the smoky room.

Isolated, without any group influence, they quickly took decisive actions—either leaving the room immediately or seeking help.

Clearly, blindly following a group can lead you to some very terrible decisions!

There are benefits to groups, but they should not be constrained by narrow ideologies and should not be corrupted. I really don't know if it's possible though!

I am not saying I will never officially join a group in the future, but the circumstances have to be exceptional.

This is again a good time to remind you – Do not treat anything as dogma. Accept what works for you and reject what doesn't OR at least adapt it to a way that works for you!

"Blind belief in authority is the greatest enemy of truth." – Albert Einstein.

Your First DUTY is towards yourself

Your first duty, obligation and responsibility is towards yourself.

Don't be misled by those who say your first duty is to your family or to community or to the land you were born in. Yes, you may care about them but your first duty is to yourself. You can't help anyone if you yourself are miserable. A starving and sick person cannot help anyone else.

It also means at times you may need to be a little ruthless. That doesn't mean you are a bad person, that just means you wish to survive and there is nothing wrong with trying to survive or wishing a peaceful life for yourself.

Let me share a personal, dietary example. **Let's not analyze this from an activist or ethical point of view**, but rather purely from the perspective of the point I am making.

These days, I generally eat more vegetarian food, however I won't classify myself as a vegetarian. If I am faced with a situation where clearly the vegetarian food is fat laden and unhealthy, and the non-vegetarian food is evidently the healthier and more palatable choice, I will eat the non-vegetarian food.

I am not going to compromise on what I feel is a healthy choice for me. **I am not going to be held by ideologies, if they are clearly not doing me any good at that time.** I may or may not become fully vegetarian in the future, but whatever decision I make, it's going to be out personal choice in terms of what's best for me, not societal ideologies.

My first duty is towards my own body because it is my body that is going to help me deal with all the external problems of the world.

For example's sake, let's imagine if a lion refuses to hunt out of compassion, can it survive? It has to fulfil its needs and for that it needs to hunt, but beyond that a lion may still have a "gentle" personality.

If you refuse to kill a mosquito out of compassion, don't complain when you later get malaria. Only when you are responsible towards your own life can you think about your responsibilities towards the world.

Some people will say humans aren't lions and other animals aren't mosquitoes. These people have missed the point entirely.

I am not ASKING anyone to become vegetarian or vegan or non-vegetarian. This isn't about diet; this is about doing that what is most appropriate for you in the long run. And that could be different things for different people.

In a way, what I am proposing has SOME similarities with the 19th century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the **Übermensch, or Overman.** It's okay, you need not worry about the pronunciation, just worry about the concept, bro.

The Übermensch is basically an individual who has rejected the common boundaries and norms of society to create his or her OWN personal set of values, morals and meaning that WORK BEST for their life.

Imagine a world where traditional structures and moral guides have collapsed. In such a world, the question arises: How do we define what is right, what is meaningful, or how to live? Nietzsche's answer was the Übermensch, an individual who, facing the vacuum left by the absence of these traditional guides, **creates new values based on their own life's experience and insight.**

The Übermensch is someone who looks at the world and decides not to follow the well-trodden path but to forge their own. This isn't about rebelling for rebellion's sake **but about a deep, thoughtful rejection of unexamined norms in favor of a life that works for you.**

By the way, don't use this concept to decide to break the law of your land! At least don't commit any serious violation, unless that violation is important enough to change the course of history. We are talking Nelson Mandela, Gandhi or Galileo level stuff, so please don't put you selling drugs in the same category. Also, it's really tough to be an Übermensch in prison. 😊

And please DO NOT confuse the idea "**Your first duty is to yourself**" to mean that I am saying your only duty is to yourself. Believing or practicing that is another recipe for major disaster.

Your first duty is to yourself and then you may choose to contribute in the world around you in whatever capacity you can, want or will enjoy.

RETHINKING HONESTY

"Honesty is the Best Policy" – Benjamin Franklin

Benny was generally a smart dude, but let me share the views of someone even smarter.

"Honesty is the best policy. I also suggest, all armies and intelligence agencies should honestly reveal all their secrets to their enemies" – Sir Anubhav Srivastava

"Honesty is the best policy, so please honestly share your bank account passwords with me" – Sir Anubhav Srivastava

When Abraham Lincoln was a young lawyer, he had to handle two similar cases on the same day, both before the same judge and involving the same legal principle. In the morning case, Lincoln represented the defendant. He gave a compelling argument and easily won.

Interestingly, in the afternoon, he represented the plaintiff in a very similar case. This time, he argued with the same passion but from the completely opposite standpoint. The judge, noticing the contradiction and somewhat entertained, asked Lincoln why his opinions had shifted since the morning. Lincoln responded with a touch of humor, "Your Honor, I could have been wrong this morning, but I know I'm right this afternoon."

The moral of this true story is: **Even someone as virtuous as Lincoln knew that honesty needs to be practical, driven by what's best suited for the situation. Regardless of what you true views were, sometimes you need to do what is needed as per the larger purpose.**

Let me share another story from the ancient Indian epic, the Mahabharat, **which in my opinion, is the greatest story ever told in the history of humanity.** For unaware western audiences, if you loved reading the *Lord of the Rings* and *A Song of Ice and Fire (Game of Thrones)*, you will be blown away by the depths that the Mahabharat goes into.

Anyway, so in the war of Mahabharat which happened between two ancient clans, the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the Pandavas, a group of 5 princely brothers and their army was fighting against the Kauravas who had the most unbelievably strong army and fighters at their disposal.

However, Pandavas had the support of Krishna, who was physically a human **but was said to literally be the Supreme Divine**. Krishna had agreed to become a charioteer for Arjun, one of the 5 Pandava princes, under the condition that he being a charioteer, would not physically destroy the opposition (which, him being the Supreme Divine could do in an instant.)

During the battle, Arjun's son, Abhimanyu was ganged up on and killed by the Kauravas, primarily because of the deceitful actions of a man named Jayadrath.

Arjun was extremely upset and swore that he would kill Jayadrath the next day and if he wasn't able to do so before sunset, he would set himself on fire and kill himself. Because the "Pandavas" represented a side who usually meant their words very seriously, the Kauravas saw this as an opportunity for Arjun to kill himself. Arjun was one of the best archers in the world, and if he did indeed kill himself, it would make it much easier for the Kauravas to win the battle.

During the next day, the Kauravas did their absolute best to protect Jayadrath. No matter how many times Arjun tried to go after him, the elite fighters from the Kaurav group kept engaging him and made it impossible for him to kill Jayadrath.

This went on for several hours. Krishna realized that Arjun was a man of his words and would indeed kill himself, if he was not able to kill Jayadrath before sunset.

So, he decided to counter deceit, with deceit. Krishna, used his divine powers to cause an unexpected Solar Eclipse.

When the Solar Eclipse happened, it seemed like Sunset had already happened. The Kauravas were elated and Arjun was heartbroken to

realize that he could not kill Jayadrath. He went down from his chariot and began building a funeral pyre for himself in which he would jump in.

The Kauravas and Jayadrath really enjoyed this. Jayadrath, who was hiding all day, came literally in front of Arjun and started taunting and mocking him, that as he had failed to kill him before sunset, he would now have to set himself on fire, and join his son Abhimanyu.

Suddenly, Krishna used his powers again to remove the Solar Eclipse. The sun became visible again. It wasn't sunset! Jayadrath became extremely scared. Arjun picked up his bow and arrow and immediately killed Jayadrath to avenge his son's death.

So, what is the lesson here? There are some situations, where for the sake of the larger purpose or for your own survival, you may have to be deceitful. **Even Krishna who literally represented "God" used deceit, because there was no other way to save Arjun.**

Clearly, too much honesty is not always the best policy, especially if the other side isn't playing by the rules either.

"One should never be too honest. If one goes to the jungle, one will see that the straight trees have been cut but those which grow in a haphazard manner are spared. Thus, a man should be simple hearted but not a simpleton"

– Chanakya

Ironically, by declaring to you that honesty may not always be the best policy in SOME SITUATIONS, **I am actually being more honest with you** than many writers of such inspirational quotes. Now I just need to figure out whether this honesty of mine was a good policy....

Don't use this as an excuse to justify dishonesty though, all I am saying is being honest every single time isn't necessarily good for you. In RARE occasions, strategic deceit maybe required. BUT being dishonest all the time or even most of the time will literally destroy your life.

Two kinds of people in the world will have a hard time living in the real world.

Who are so honest that their honesty does more harm to them than good, and they don't even know when somebody takes advantage of them.

Those who are so dishonest that they are always seeking to take advantage of people at every chance.

Don't be so naïve that everyone fools you but don't be so manipulative that you think you can get away with anything. **You are not above the laws of nature.**

There is still such a thing called cause and effect. The more often you are dishonest, more you need to complicate things, the more you complicate things, the more you will lie and sooner or later you will either get caught or live your entire life with the fear of getting caught. In the end it's not worth it.

RETHINKING "HARD WORK"

Growing up I had always been taught the importance of hard work, how everything of value had to be hard. If it wasn't hard, it wasn't useful.

Anything you were actually enjoying was bad for you. Anything you hated and found hard and where you pushed yourself beyond your limits was the best thing for real progress in life.

Most parents of kids of the 1990s told stories of how they had crossed mountains to pursue education and swam in crocodile infested waters to go to school, so clearly there were high standards to meet.

We were also told proverbs that basically said if you work hard, you are going to be rich and if you genuinely have fun, you are going to be a failure.

Well after having dedicated more than 15 years of my life to society dictated hard work and suffering physically as well as mentally as a result of it, **I am done with doing any work that I don't enjoy.**

I am done with overextending myself doing what I hate, just in the hopes of the reward in the future.

It doesn't mean I don't work, there are days sometimes when I can still work on things for 14 hours straight, but it is ONLY and ONLY when I am genuinely involved in the process and completely absorbed in it.

If I am not in zone or not in the mood, I will completely let it go for hours or even days,

And contrary to nonsense advice on hard work, not working way too hard on things, sometimes makes them much better.

Let me share an example from my past.

I am pretty good at singing, although I am absolutely aware I am not going to win Indian/American Idol anytime soon. Still, I am alright.

Back in my college days there was a singing competition. Before this I had never taken part in such competitions and I thought it was about time that the world got to know about that side of me.

So, I found a song that suited the vibe and style I do good with. I still remember the song, it was "Aa bhi Jaa" by the singer Lucky Ali.

Surprisingly, naturally, without much practise, I sung that particular song well, so I decided that this was the song I would sing in the audition.

But then all the advice given in textbooks and by wise people started coming into my head. If I was lazy, I would not perform the song well. I

ought to work very hard and practice the song to perfection. So, I practiced it for hours and hours over several days.

My “**hard work, effort, dedication, determination, devotion, discipline, persistence, perseverance, willpower, never say die attitude**” etc. paid off in the audition! (But IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION)

I could barely sing the song in the audition as I had lost my voice due to over-practice. When it mattered the most, I flopped! Needless to say, I didn’t make it!

Later, having realized this folly of mine, I avoided over-practising during songs and did manage to rank pretty well in a couple of other college singing competitions.

However, clearly this hard work related brainwashing was still drilled deep into my mind and so for 15 years I kept working super hard on my business and my movie, **only to realize that everything good in my life FELT LIKE it came effortlessly, and whatever I worked super hard for, only gave me pain, anxiety and sadness and even a feeling of helplessness.**

So, there is an “optimum” amount of hard work, different for each individual and different for each endeavour, beyond which not only do you not get any additional returns, you start doing more harm than good.

The idiom - “The harder you work, the luckier you get” is ONLY true till that optimum point, not beyond it. And you have to discover that optimum point for yourself.

Let’s take a look at a couple of famous people in history whose hard work, led to a mental breakdown. I am sure there are billions of nameless examples like that in the real world. But let’s focus, for example’s sake, on a couple of well known names.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the philosopher, whose last name I learned to spell only after much effort, didn’t gain much recognition during his lifetime. In fact, it wasn’t until after his death that his ideas really took off.

During his life, he struggled with feelings of isolation and loneliness, which he expressed in poignant letters.

In one, he wrote about the pain of being unnoticed and unloved for fifteen years despite working EXTREMELY HARD.

In another, he lamented how infrequently he heard a friendly voice, describing his situation as being “absurdly alone.”

These feelings of isolation weren't just emotionally taxing; they may have had a significant impact on his health.

Otto Binswanger, the director of the mental hospital where Nietzsche spent some time, had a conversation with Nietzsche's mother where he suggested that the philosopher's intense intellectual and emotional dedication to his work might have overwhelmed his nervous system.

Binswanger thought that Nietzsche's relentless pursuit of his philosophical ideas essentially 'FRIED' his brain to a detrimental extent.

Isaac Newton

Newton, renowned for his groundbreaking contributions to mathematics, physics, and astronomy, reportedly experienced a period of intense mental strain that some have described as insanity. This period was characterized by intense paranoia and erratic behavior.

It's often speculated that his mental health issues were partly due to his obsessive focus on his work, coupled with a lack of social interactions and other interests outside his scientific endeavors.

Newton's life shows the potential risks of over-immersion in intellectual pursuits without sufficient balance.

“One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important” - Bertrand Russell

Albert Einstein

Einstein, on the other hand, while equally devoted to his scientific work, maintained various interests outside his research. His love for music, particularly the violin, and his active engagement in social and political discussions, are well-documented. Einstein's broader set of interests and his social engagements might have contributed to a more balanced life, possibly buffering against the mental health challenges that Newton faced.

Einstein's lifestyle suggests that having diverse interests and social connections can complement and even enhance one's primary work, contributing to overall well-being and potentially fostering creativity.

And thus, it is not surprising that Einstein wrote "***Play is the highest form of research!***"

Implications for Intellectual Pursuits

The comparison between Newton and Einstein supports the idea that engaging in a variety of activities and maintaining social connections can be beneficial, not just for personal well-being, but also for the quality and impact of one's work.

Einstein's ability to contribute profoundly to physics while also enjoying music and engaging with the world suggests that these outside interests might have provided him with mental breaks, new perspectives, and creative inspiration that enriched his scientific work.

This does not detract from Newton's genius or his contributions but rather highlights the potential personal cost of extreme focus and isolation. It suggests that a more balanced approach, as seen in Einstein's life, can lead to significant achievements without necessarily compromising one's mental health.

In today's culture, everyone wants to brag about being the "hardest worker in the room."

BUT, there is no need to try to be the “hardest worker in the room.”

First there can only be one hardest worker in the room and second, it doesn't really *matter bro.*

“I am the hardest worker in the room, but I am the only one in the room.”
– Sir Anubhav Srivastava (Winner of the 2024 Academy Award, for Best Actor, for his role in the Movie, “Hard Work”)

What we need today is a combination of western intellectual traditions and eastern philosophical approaches. The typical intellectual western philosopher loves to think, while the typical eastern philosopher advocates for a "no mind" approach.

While intellectual and rational questioning is absolutely necessary to examine things from all angles, sometimes, too much thinking becomes the problem. There is a reason why you will hear of Western philosophers often experiencing nervous breakdowns, while this is a less heard of phenomenon in eastern philosophical approaches.

I am NOT saying one is better than the other. To say one is better than the other is like saying that fitness that comes from strength training is better than fitness than comes from cardio. It makes no sense. Both are important.

Western Intellectual Tradition: Often characterized by rigorous analysis, the pursuit of knowledge through reason, and sometimes, a degree of separation between the intellect and the emotional or spiritual self. Figures like Newton and Nietzsche, who immersed themselves deeply in their intellectual pursuits, sometimes to the detriment of their mental health, exemplify the potential risks of this approach when not balanced with other aspects of human experience.

Overthinking is a literal addiction of sorts. Imagine you are in a restaurant. Now instead of enjoying the meal, you start wondering about the ingredients behind the meal and the ingredients behind those ingredients, and so on! You forget the most important thing of all, enjoying

the food. This is addictive overthinking, especially if you are unable to PULL yourself out of the loop when you want!

Eastern Philosophical Approaches: Many Eastern philosophies, such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Zen, advocate for a state of "no mind", where the aim is not to overuse the intellect but to achieve a harmonious balance between the mind, body, and spirit. This approach values intuition, mindfulness, and a deep connection with the natural world, suggesting that true insight and well-being come from a place of balance and detachment from excessive intellectual striving.

As emotional and rational beings, humans can benefit from a blend of rigorous scientific inquiry and mindful, balanced living.

This approach does not see the emotional and the rational as opposing forces but as complementary aspects of the human experience that, when harmonized, can lead to a more fulfilling existence.

The objective of this book is to ultimately combine both approaches to help you lead a fulfilling life.

DECIMATING GUILT

Some time ago, I read a post by someone on LinkedIn, which as of 2024 is the go-to place on the Internet, for nauseating, hypocritical and sometimes downright stupid information, posted as wisdom.

In fact, you can safely bet, the wider the reach, the more stupid the information probably is.

So, the post described the CEO of some company who was with his team on a "vacation" in a resort. Then he said, there was suddenly dealing with an angry client who experienced a sudden crisis. So, he got his entire team, who were on "vacation" with him and they worked 36 hours non-stop even while holidaying to resolve the client's crisis successfully.

He then went on to use it as a badge of honor to show how hardcore he and his team were that they would work 36 hours nonstop even in a vacation.

He may think it's an achievement, but most of his non brainwashed employees must be at some point questioning why they were sacrificing their precious lives for people who didn't see them as human beings who deserved rest, just in the name of being "hardcore."

Bro if you are so hardcore, a few of your staff members (or maybe you yourself) should have stayed in office to resolve such unexpected queries or you should have made other provisions. You may fool yourself all you want, you haven't exactly proven to be a competent boss, but you have surely proven yourself to be a doormat in the eyes of your clients.

If nothing else, you should have just seen it as a mess up to be ashamed of, and quietly given your employees extra days off. Instead, you chose to brag about it on LinkedIn, glorifying your obvious incompetency as if you just saved the world from an alien attack.

It is difficult to free fools from the chains they worship. — Voltaire

You have to deprogram the guilt that has so frequently and deeply been programmed into you with regards to hard work and not staying idle. **Such programming is good for the system because then it can make every individual work super hard but it is rarely good for the individual.**

REMEMBER the ant eaten by sheep? Most of your beliefs are not your own!

If a bunch of people die out severe exhaustion and related diseases through overwork, hey, who cares, it is just collateral damage to the system because it doesn't care about the individual.

And if you get sick because of that same overwork, but don't die immediately, hey that's good for the system because now it can make a lot

of money treating the diseases that didn't necessarily need to happen so quickly (or at all) in the first place, **had you not been programmed into feeling guilty for not working 18 hours a day.**

I am not saying you can't work that long, but you should do it only when you want to only when it doesn't feel like work to you.

If you are doing it because the system has manipulated you into thinking you are good for nothing if you are not working and in reality, you hate it, you are screwed big time, and to survive as an individual you need some major deprogramming.

Another clarification. You may have to work "Harder" when starting out when you have energy or when you are starting a new enterprise. But it is only for two purposes. **Either you enjoy what you do so much that it doesn't feel like work or you are working to set up systems that will eventually help you work less hard.**

Remember - The ONLY logical reason to work hard should be to build systems and processes that later help you work LESS hard. If someone tells you to spend all your life working hard, for the sake of working hard, even if you hate working hard, you my friend have been fooled by society and wasting away a life that you are never going to get back.

By the way during this time minimizing and debt your liabilities and keeping your habits go a long way in achieving this. Choosing not to take on voluntary debt and controlling your expenses by moving to areas where expenses are less is under your control, **increasing your income overnight is not under your direct control no matter what the motivational gurus say.**

There will be some people who say they managed to become extremely rich by laying out some proven and guaranteed step by step process and will tell you that you can absolutely increase your income by a certain percentage if you follow that process. **It's complete nonsense.**

There is no guaranteed step by step process for uncertain things like real world "success." Everything is contingent on a variety of factors and even if they are genuinely sincere, it is not necessary that what worked for them will work for you.

By the way, don't get me wrong - I am NOT blindly supporting or berating any economic ideology like Capitalism, Communism or Socialism, because, in the end, they are all ideologies that ultimately benefit the people controlling the system.

What I am promoting is a thought process (not a rigid ideology) that is best for you as the individual and also the environment around you.

I am suggesting compassionate individualism, or in other words the philosophy that "Your first responsibility is to yourself." But note I didn't say your only responsibility is to yourself.

Showing some "compassion" to the world around you, at least from time to time, isn't such a bad thing for society as a whole.

The 5 "Modes" You Need to Have a Truly Fulfilling Life

Hard work is perfectly fine in bursts. When the situation demands it:

Like if there is an emergency situation

If there is a battle.

If there is a medical emergency

If there is a crucial sports competition nearing its finale.

If there is a "truly urgent" career or business-related situation

Think about the natural courses of life - are animals always working hard or are they resting too? Is a Lion ALWAYS in attack mode?

What happens if it will be? I will tell you what will happen, it will get exhausted and soon get killed by another animal.

Every period of intense activity needs to be complimented with periods of doing something totally different.

Similarly, our intellectual pursuits should be balanced with times of fun, worldly activity and just doing nothing, to keep you relatively sane

I myself have observed that anytime I get overly focused on one area, I eventually start experiencing anxiety and depression.

From experience, I have observed that there are five “modes” an average individual needs to have a fulfilling life.

They are Career Mode, Hobby Mode, Learning Mode, Fun Mode and “Do Nothing” Mode. Let’s explore them.

Career Mode

- **Purpose:** Focusing on professional growth, achievements, and contributions to one's field.
- **Benefit:** Provides a sense of accomplishment and financial stability.

For me, the career mode is the Business training/consulting/keynote speaking or any other business activities I will start to pursue a practical life where I can have a lifestyle I want for as long as possible, especially keeping in mind the rapidly changing world where nothing is certain.

Hobby Mode

- **Purpose:** Engaging in creative or other productive pursuits that genuinely fulfil you, mostly as a hobby
- **Benefit:** Fosters innovation, reduces stress, and enhances problem-solving skills.

The books I write and other active hobbies I pursue. It is primarily for fulfilment and channeling energy which would otherwise lead to frustration or channeling into destructive pursuits.

Learning Mode

- **Purpose:** Continuous personal or professional development through new skills and knowledge.
- **Benefit:** Keeps the mind active and adaptable, opening up new opportunities.

I am constantly reading, learning from experiences, learning from others' experiences, and learning from life in general. If you are not learning, you really have nothing new to offer in the career and creative modes of your life. **A caution though- Don't rely on social media as a mode of learning.** Most of the time, it's manipulated NONSENSE based on what is popular at the time, not what is necessarily good for you.

Even learning how to cook or acquire any specific skill can be considered a part of learning mode. Once you have acquired the skill, if you are having fun doing it, it becomes a hobby!

Fun Mode

- **Purpose:** Prioritizing activities that bring nothing but pure fun in themselves. There is no means to the end.
- **Benefit:** Improves mood, strengthens relationships, and prevents burnout.

It could be vacations, watching Netflix or just basically anything you do to loaf around. **There is NO end goal for this except having fun.** Although, ironically sometimes the best ideas I get for books or in my training is through things that are clearly entertainment.

Remember what Einstein said – “Play is the highest form of research!”

An additional note: You may engage in activities primarily for pleasure, **as long as you don't indulge in those that cause pain later.**

Some examples of such activities are consuming so much alcohol that you lose your senses the next day, indulging in narcotics, consuming excessive junk food and so on.

Why is this avoiding pleasure that leads to pain later SO CRUCIAL? You will find out soon.

Do Nothing Mode

- **Purpose:** Allowing oneself time to rest, reflect, and not engage in any goal-directed activity.
- **Benefit:** Essential for mental health, creativity, and overall well-being. Helps in processing experiences and ideas.

Believe it or not, you are NOT always meant to be doing something. Sometimes the best thing you need to do to recharge yourself is to do NOTHING, not even “fun” activities, not even reading or anything else. You just sit, close your eyes and do nothing or you keep them open and do nothing.

Doing nothing can be surprisingly tough though especially with all the social pressure around.

A 2007 study showed that in the game of soccer, goalkeepers statistically might have a higher chance of stopping a penalty by standing still more often, but they frequently dive because of societal and psychological pressure to act—even when stillness could be more effective. **And one cannot blame them.**

After all, picture this: the goalkeeper chooses to stand still, making no move as the ball is kicked into the top corner of the net. The backlash would be immediate and intense. Teammates might criticize their lack of effort, fans might shout insults, and the media could scrutinize every aspect of that decision

The goalkeeper might feel embarrassed, guilty, and under immense pressure to justify their inaction in the post-match interviews, even if standing still might have been the statistically smarter move.

This scenario highlights a common dilemma: we often feel compelled to act, to do something, even when doing nothing might actually be more rational or yield better results. **There's a fear of being judged for inaction, a worry that it looks like we don't care or aren't trying hard enough.**

This pressure to always "do something" can make the option of doing nothing one of the hardest decisions to defend.

If you choose to "do nothing" for a while, your mind will try to guilt trip you, that you are not being productive. Society will guilt trip you that you are not being productive when you choose to have idle periods.

It's a trap thanks to conventional wisdom you have been brainwashed with. Don't fall for it. An idle mind is NOT always the Devil's workshop.

A somewhat idle mind is actually God's workshop, not the Devil's, because it gives you a chance to introspect and contemplate what you really want out of life. Those who say it is always the Devil's workshop, want you to remain society's slave and never discover "God."

These modes—career, creativity, learning, fun, and do nothing—are not isolated experiences but interconnected aspects of a holistic life. Like the philosophical divergence between the intense focus of Western intellectualism and the balanced, mindful approach of Eastern philosophies, our lives are best lived at the intersection of varied pursuits and experiences.

By switching between these modes regularly, individuals can ensure they are nurturing all aspects of their being—intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual.

Moreover, this approach encourages resilience. Just as diversifying investments can reduce financial risk, diversifying life's pursuits can safeguard against the shocks and changes inherent in each mode. **For instance, if one's career mode is in a lull, having a rich, creative, or fun mode can compensate, maintaining overall life satisfaction**

Switching modes is as important as the changing cycles of the seasons and the changing cycle of day and night. Maintain any of the seasons or day/night for too long and the world will feel severe side effects very quickly!

Now, in the beginning you may have to consciously think about switching modes, but after a while it will start happening intuitively. **The true nature of our body is anyway to enjoy all of this without thinking about modes and overcomplicating stuff.**

But sometimes to get rid of bad programming installed by the societal brainwashing you need to consciously add new programming!

One final clarification - Unlike seasons and the natural rhythm of day and night, these modes DO NOT have to equally distributed every single day.

You can have one mode for several days or even weeks at a time, when urgent, but eventually you need to balance it out, ESPECIALLY if you begin to be overwhelmed.

If you don't have all five of these modes in your life at least at some level, it is quite possible that at the end of your life, even if it is 100 years long, you could feel your life was "missing something."

A Word on Benny "The Time Table" Franklin

Ladies and gentlemen, step right up for a glimpse into the life of Benjamin Franklin, the patriarch of punctuality, the sultan of schedules, and yes, quite possibly the grandpa of timetables.

If you thought your life was regimented, wait till you learn more about Benny the Franky's daily grind – a schedule so tight it makes spandex look loose.

If there was ever a poster boy for over planning, it has to be Franklin. The guy was the founding father of not only America but probably also the timetables we hated at school.

His day began at the crack of dawn. While we're lost in dreams about not having to go to work, Benny was already up, asking himself, "What good shall I do this day?" Talk about pressure. Here I am, just trying to decide if I have the energy to brush my teeth, and Franklin's already interrogating himself.

Post his morning interrogation with himself, he'd sit down and pondering over the existential dread of uncompleted to-do lists.

Then, as the sun set, Benny would question himself again, "What good have I done today?" It's like having a boss that lives inside your head—24/7 performance reviews by your own conscience.

He turned each day into a masterpiece of efficiency, a schedule so refined it makes our modern calendars look like the wild creations of procrastinators.

He even meticulously scheduled his entertainment time as if he were planning a corporate merger.

Here are some of Benny Boy's beautiful and profound guilt provoking quotes.

"Be always ashamed to catch thyself idle."

"Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of."

"You may delay, but time will not."

"Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful."

"If time be of all things most precious, wasting time must be the greatest prodigality, since lost time is never found again; and what we call time enough always proves little enough. Let us then be up and doing, and doing to a purpose"

"If you were a servant, would you not be ashamed that a good master should catch you idle?"

That's right, folks—feeling guilty about enjoying that second cup of coffee? Benny Boy Franky's ghost is hovering over you

According to Benny, time is that friend who arrives at the party early and judges you for every minute you're late.

Hats off to you, Benny! Thanks for setting your standards so high, we need a telescope just to see them.

Who needs spontaneity and leisure when you can conquer the world one ticked checkbox at a time?

Here's a juicy tidbit though that might ruffle the feathers of every time-management guru out there: Franklin's ground-shaking, earth-shattering inventions didn't really take off until he actually—gasp—slowed down a bit.

That's right, folks! All those life-altering inventions like the lightning rod, bifocals, and the Franklin stove? They didn't come from Benny frantically running around like a headless chicken. No, they came when he finally put his feet up and took a breather!

And how did our venerable overachiever manage to find this mythical thing called 'free time'? Well, it turns out he had to offload the daily grind of his businesses to someone else. Yep, the moment Benny handed over the keys to the print shop and said, "You deal with this, I'm off to play with electricity and bifocals," that's when the magic happened.

Here is Benny in his own words, while writing to a friend – "I am in a fair way of having no other tasks than such as I shall like to give myself, and of enjoying what I look upon as a great happiness, leisure to read, study, make experiments, and converse at large . . . on such points as may produce something for the common benefit of mankind, uninterrupted by the little cares and fatigues of business."

Imagine that—Franklin, the poster boy for productivity, finding his eureka moments not in the daily hustle but in the sweet solitude of his own thoughts.

Who knew that stepping back and letting someone else handle the nitty-gritty could lead to such brilliance? **It's almost as if—and brace yourself for this wild idea—being perpetually busy isn't the key to genius!**

So, while we've all been sold this dream that to be like Franklin we need to micromanage every second of our waking lives, it turns out Benny himself needed to ditch his own rulebook to truly shine.

Maybe there's a lesson in there for all of us. Maybe, just maybe, it's not about filling every moment with tasks but about finding the space between them to let our minds wander to the next big thing.

Here is another reason to avoid being perpetually busy - **The BUSIER you are, the faster it will feel that time passed you by.** I have certainly found it to be true in my case from the years 2011 to almost 2023.

This was the time that I have worked my absolute hardest, only to realize that most of the things I worked super hard for didn't materialize in the way they wanted and the often the things I didn't focus on too much calmly on (or not at all) materialized as if it were magic.

Yet, it seems the that these 12 years passed by as if they were nothing.

Now the opposite is true as well. If you have nothing to do, it will seem as if days go on for eternity, which is another dread in itself.

So, as always, my solution for this would be the middle way, the path of moderation, where you work and relax appropriately throughout your life.

Neither ascetism nor gluttony made the Buddha enlightened, what made him enlightened was the middle way or the path of moderation.

Don't feel guilty of the days you waste on doing things you enjoy. Feel fearful of the decades you waste on doing the things you hate.

"If work is interpreted to be a definite performance in a specified time according to a rigid rule, then I may be the laziest. Every effort under compulsion demands a sacrifice of life-energy. I never paid such a price. On the contrary, I have thrived on my thoughts." – Nikola Tesla

You CANNOT Sustain what you don't enjoy

There is an old Indian Proverb, often repeated by parents and teachers when they want to fool you, I mean, motivate you, into giving up your soul for some so-called glorious goal. The proverb, in its original form sounds like this -

"By practicing extremely hard and being extremely dedicated, even the fool can become wise, just like a rope used to pull buckets of water can over time, erode even the stone of the well."

All good and "well", but did anyone consider that in the process of eroding the stone, the rope itself is torn apart to shreds?

This is what happens when you try to sustain for years and years, doing what you hate. You may "leave a mark" but end up destroying yourself in the process.

One of the main reasons people deal with guilt is because of their obsession with perfection. If they are on a diet and for some reason cheat on their diet, they feel so guilty and worthless they let go of the diet totally simply because they believe that as they were not perfect, all of their hard work is now pointless.

If you have committed yourself to something, after feeling guilty about past mistakes (for example related to your health) and for some reason you are not able to adhere to it perfectly, it's okay, as long as you are doing the best you can.

Till now, I am in reasonably okay body shape precisely because I have allowed myself to be imperfect. When I was trying to be absolutely perfect, I used to work out religiously for a few weeks before I realized it

was just not possible for me to cope with this kind of physical activity on a daily basis.

Not only was I not getting time to do other important things, I was getting physically burnt out and developing nagging injuries. So, I quit working out for some time and in a few weeks my body returned to pre workout days making me feel depressed, this further fuelled guilt and anger and I quit totally.

This obsession for the perfect body and adherence to schedules perfectly and becoming guilty when I could not follow it, only backfired on me.

I made a decision that I would exercise only twice a week if I had to but I would not completely stop.

I would ALSO only work out to the point it was enjoyable and sustainable, not to the point that I began to hate it or led to injuries.

I am not a natural “exercise” guy, I don’t feel the same “high” that many people feel after exercise.

Others who become super-fit and stay that way in the long run is because they genuinely get a high out of it, one way or the other.

I don’t. In fact, intense exercise makes me feel worse.

So, I decided to do what works for me.

That is only do something till the point it is sustainable in the long run. If you can’t sustain a habit in the long run, there’s anyway no point doing it.

I have also completely got rid of all schedules and timetables (**Goodbye Benny Boy**). They only make feel guilty about not doing something while not contributing anything other than stress.

Contrary to the motivational guys, constantly relying on will power is not sustainable. You either enjoy something or you don’t. You continue what you enjoy (or are paid for) or you quit.

So, if you don’t genuinely enjoy something but you have to do it, **go slow and go long, instead of going fast and burning out.**

Now for many of you, the guilt may have to do with something else. It may be giving up addictions or maybe trying to correct some other mistakes you did in the recent or distant past. The process is the same. Stop trying to be perfect, because the moment you try to be perfect and fail, you will begin to feel guilty once again.

Commit yourself to doing your best to do the things that lessen the guilt associated with those mistakes and do what is under your control today.

If you are able to take the more extreme approach and succeed, great! But if you aren't, take this gentler approach.

You will realize that even if you are not perfect, a gentle commitment to doing something and sticking with it in the long term is much better than taking an extreme, painful approach that you give up in a week!

"Prosperity, pleasure, pious deeds... Enough! In the dreary forest of the world the mind finds no rest. For how many lifetimes have you done hard and painful labor with body, mind and speech? It is time to stop." – Ashtavakra Gita

The Art of Effortless Doing

There is an ancient Taoist Philosophy which will explain to you even in much greater detail, that you can effortlessly do what you want to do or effortlessly adapt to changing circumstances instead of trying to change the world to your whims and fancies, which almost never works.

Before I name this philosophy, let me explore why learning the art of effortless doing is so important.

We have made everything hard in our mind because that's what we have been taught and yes to be fair, getting anything done, does require change, but that change doesn't have to be done in a painful way. That

change can be done in a sustainable and enjoyable way. You swim with the current of life instead of swimming against it.

Dismissing natural requirements such as sleep as bad, sexuality as bad, desiring to have fun as bad, is a uniquely human phenomenon. No other being fights with natural needs as much as humans do and takes pride in the same while not necessarily making their lives better doing so.

An average animal generally lives a happier life compared to an average human, even with all the life threats around. Animals, live and die in nature without complicating their lives. We slave away our entire lives doing things we hate, thanks to society's invention of a collective delusion called money and then end up giving all the money in medical bills to die alone in a hospital, away from our loved ones instead of being surrounded by them.

Animals are not a lower birth, ironically, we are just finding patterns to assert our own superiority because we think, **while that thinking is the very thing that leads to pain.**

Animals don't need a purpose to exist, such existential dilemmas only haunt humans, so how are we "more evolved?"

Why is it that the more "intelligent" we become, the unhappier we are. And they say humans are supposed to be more evolved??

In a world that often praises the relentless pursuit of overcomplication and making things HARDER than they need to be, **the ancient Taoist principle of Wu-Wei invites us to consider a different path—one where less effort can yield more substantial results.**

Wu-Wei, often translated as "non-action" or "effortless action," is not about inactivity but about finding the most effective way to achieve our goals with minimal struggle.

This philosophy advocates for actions that are in harmony with the natural flow of life, promoting a graceful approach to personal and professional challenges

But first, who first came up with the concept of Wu-Wei?

Central to Taoism are the teachings of **Laozi**, whose insights into the nature of existence and the art of living continue to resonate through millennia.

Laozi often considered the founder of Taoism, is a semi-legendary figure believed to have lived in the 6th century BCE. This places him contemporaneously with Confucius in China and not long before Socrates in Greece.

It is believed that he first spoke about the concept of Wu-Wei, which advocates for 'action through non-action,' and challenges our conventional views on effort and control, suggesting that the most effective form of action often arises from surrender to the natural flow.

In, the simplest terms Wu-Wei means you don't try to swim upstream when the river is going downstream.

I remember the first time I unconsciously, started practising the art of "effortless doing." Surprisingly, it was at school 😊

Back in the 1990's in India, if you did not do homework, as a punishment, the class teacher forced you to write 200 times in your notebook this particular sentence - **"I will not forget to do my homework again"** or something stupid along those lines.

After going through such stupid exercise a few times, I finally realized there was a hack.

Instead of writing the whole sentence **"I will not forget to do my homework again" two hundred times, I figured there was a far easier way.**

I realized if I wrote ONLY the letter "**I**" vertically first from top to down, two hundred times, and then I wrote ONLY "**will**" first from top to down, two hundred times, and then same for "**not**" (and so on), I would be completing the task way relatively faster and effortlessly than anyone else, who wrote the entire sentence, one by one, two hundred times.

Don't believe me? Try it yourself!

I was naturally Wu-Wei! I was naturally involved in the art of effortless doing!

But as I grew up, I was taught the importance of hard work and forgot everything about going with the flow.

I was made to believe, it was lazy to go with the flow, there was much more glory in making things as hard as possible.

In my last book, "**Unlearn; A Practical Guide to Business & Life**", in the end I made a list of things that caused me pain in my professional and personal life and wrote about the "unlearning" of these things.

Most of these things were those that I was trying to "push through" unnaturally even if it meant going against what was unfolding in my life naturally, and using extreme will power to do even what I did not enjoy.

I did all this **because I was PROMISED by historically worshipped motivational bros like Light Bulb Tommy (the inventor who wants you to spend 10,000 years failing) and Sir Hapoleon Nil (author of the profound book, Don't Think, Just Grow Thick)** that there was light at the end of the tunnel.

At the end of an extremely long tunnel, when I found a shining load of crap instead, I realized, it was time to let go of all the nonsense I had been fed in my life by society for 35 plus years.

The problem wasn't that nothing good had come in my life, **the problem was that nothing good had come the way I imagined it.**

The problem wasn't that I wasn't blessed, the problem was that I ultimately realized my blessings had a very limited correlation with "**hard work.**"

This in itself would not be such an issue had we not been brainwashed with the idea that we make our own fates. The problem is that we are scared of accepting that so little is under our own control.

It is then I realized that instead of making nature bend to my whims and fancies, perhaps I should stop fighting nature.

I decided to revert to my way of thinking as a child. It was along the lines of this.

What is to come let it come, what is to go let it go.

Life should be fun, like a play. You compete hard and disappoint yourself by losing. You play only to have fun.

You cannot sustain what you don't enjoy. Don't rely excessively on willpower

When you try unnaturally hard to become something, you are like a fish trying to fly. If you were meant to fly, you would have been made a bird. Come to terms with who you really are. Nature will itself lead you towards what you are truly meant to do, if only you would stop fighting with it.

Imagine yourself standing in the midst of a bamboo forest. As a strong gust of wind sweeps through, you witness the tall stalks bend almost to the point of touching the earth, yet they don't break.

When the wind subsides, they gracefully return to their original upright positions. This remarkable flexibility allows bamboo to survive and even thrive under the most adverse weather conditions, from violent storms to heavy snowfalls.

Just as bamboo bends with the wind rather than resisting it, Wu-Wei teaches us to adapt to life's challenges without unnecessary struggle, allowing us to flow with the changes and difficulties that come our way.

Now, consider the image of a surfer poised at the edge of the ocean, watching the waves roll in. **This surfer doesn't have the power to create the waves, nor can they stop them;** instead, they learn to read the sea's rhythms and patterns, using their skills to harness the energy of the water to ride the waves skilfully. Each wave is different—some are small and manageable, others large and powerful—but the adept surfer uses timing, balance, and knowledge of the sea to navigate them all.

This again illustrates the concept of Wu-Wei, or "effortless action," in how we should approach our environments, whether they are natural, economic, social, or professional.

Just as a surfer aligns themselves with the ocean, so too can we align with the currents flowing through our own lives and workspaces.

This concept teaches that often the best way to achieve our goals is not through force but through well-considered, minimal, and seemingly effortless actions that align with the natural rhythms and dynamics of our environment.

So, what are some practical ways of applying it in real life?

Let's say you are an event planner, tasked with organizing a large, prestigious outdoor festival. The event is set for the spring, and expectations are sky-high. Months of planning go into selecting the perfect location, setting up stages, and booking bands. As the festival date approaches, the weather forecasts begin to predict unexpected rainstorms throughout the week of the event.

Panicked, you consider investing heavily in weatherproofing equipment, large tents, and even pondering relocating the event to an indoor venue at the last minute. The stress is palpable; sleepless nights follow as you try to control every variable, fighting against the natural course of the upcoming storm.

In the evening as you sit exhausted at your desk, surrounded by weather forecasts and contingency plans, you pause. You realize that in your frantic efforts to control the uncontrollable, you are swimming against the current.

Instead of viewing the weather as a hindrance, you embrace it as a feature of the festival. You announce the "Spring Rain Music Festival," promising an unforgettable experience of music and nature combined.

You adapt the marketing to celebrate the lush, rainy backdrop as perfect for dancing and enjoying music, turning the muddy ground into a feature, not a bug.

You provide attendees with branded raincoats and slip-proof boots, set up cozy, covered seating areas with hot drinks, and reorganize the lineup to include acoustic sets that would feel intimate under the canopy of gentle rain.

The festival arrives, and the rain pours as predicted, but the atmosphere is electric. Attendees, prepared for a wet weekend, dive into the experience with gusto. The media coverage spins positive, praising the unique blend of music and nature, and how well the event turned an unexpected situation into an asset.

What could have been a disaster becomes a triumph. The festival is talked about, not despite the rain, but because of how beautifully it was woven into the experience.

Look around your life for a "rainstorm" – a situation where you're struggling against the inevitable, putting in exhaustive efforts to control or change something uncontrollable.

Instead of continuing the struggle: Take a step back and assess the situation from a Wu-Wei perspective. **What is the natural flow here? What is the path of least resistance?**

Consider how you can work with the situation instead of against it. Maybe it's a project at work that needs rethinking, or a personal goal that requires a different approach.

Shift your mindset to see the potential benefits of aligning with the natural course of events. How can this new approach reduce stress and lead to unexpected outcomes?

This example embodies Wu-Wei by illustrating how sometimes, letting go of the struggle and working with the natural course of events, rather than against them, can lead to novel solutions and unexpected successes. It

teaches us that embracing our circumstances, rather than fighting them, can unlock creativity and opportunity.

Let's now look at another example.

Have you ever meticulously planned a vacation, filling every hour with activities, only to return feeling like you need another holiday just to recover?

When you over-plan, you might find yourself in a constant state of checking schedules and rushing from one planned activity to the next, never truly experiencing the moment.

This approach can make any vacation or project feel like a series of tasks to be checked off a list rather than enjoyed. The essence of Wu-Wei lies in finding the natural rhythm of experiences, which often means leaving space for spontaneity and letting the journey unfold naturally.

Imagine planning a trip to a new city. Instead of scheduling every meal and museum visit, you choose a few must-see sites and leave ample time unplanned. This approach allows you to discover a charming café or a local art gallery that you might otherwise have missed. It also reduces stress, letting you adjust your day based on mood and energy levels, which are often unpredictable.

Actionable Advice for Integrating Wu-Wei into Planning

1. **Set Key Priorities:** Decide what's most important for your trip or project and plan loosely around these priorities. Allow the rest to remain flexible.
2. **Embrace Detours:** Sometimes the best experiences come from unexpected detours. Whether it's a delayed flight leading to a surprising overnight in a city you've never visited or a wrong turn that brings you to the best view, these moments can become treasured memories.
3. **Observe and Respond:** As you go about your planned activities, stay observant of how you feel and the opportunities around you. If something feels too rushed or no longer appeals, feel free to change

course. This responsiveness is a practice in Wu-Wei, adjusting naturally to the environment.

4. **Be Present:** By not overfilling your schedule, you give yourself the chance to be fully present in each activity. This quality of presence allows you to fully engage and often leads to a deeper appreciation and enjoyment of the moment.
5. **Learn from Each Experience:** Reflect on your experiences with different levels of planning. What did you learn about your preferences and the benefits of having open, unplanned periods? Use these insights to inform future plans, finding your own balance between structure and spontaneity.

In essence, avoiding overplanning and incorporating the principles of Wu-Wei in your life means learning to move with life's rhythms rather than dictating every step. It teaches you to use planning as a tool, not a crutch, ensuring that your experiences are rich, fulfilling, and above all, effortlessly enjoyed.

Final Example of Wu-Wei – Learning how to swim

Learning how to swim exemplifies the balance between comfort and risk, embodying the principles of Wu-Wei in a literal sense. When you first approach the water, the challenge is not just about mastering the strokes but about overcoming the innate fear of drowning—a powerful motivator that can either spur growth or paralyze progress.

Let's say a young child is being introduced to the pool. The first step is not to dive into the deep end but to simply sit by the edge, perhaps splashing water with their hands. This stage is about getting comfortable with the water's feel, temperature, and movements within a safe environment. It's a necessary foundation, aligning with the principle of Wu-Wei by allowing the child to harmonize with the water's nature in a controlled setting.

The next step involves gradually entering the water, starting in the shallow end where feet can still touch the ground. Here, the learner might practice submerging their face, blowing bubbles, and performing basic floatation exercises. These activities are slightly uncomfortable at first but are

essential for building confidence. This stage is crucial; it represents the border of the comfort zone where learning accelerates—pushing slightly beyond previous limits without causing panic or distress.

With basics under their belt, the swimmer begins actual stroke practice—first with aids like kickboards or noodles, then unassisted. This stage often involves swallowing a bit of water and dealing with initial disorientation.

Here, the swimmer is right at the edge of their comfort zone, where their skills are tested, and their abilities grow. Each lap across the pool stretches their capabilities and builds muscle memory, aligning with Wu-Wei as actions begin to flow more naturally, despite the exertion involved.

Finally, as skills solidify, swimming becomes less about conscious effort and more about enjoyment and refinement. The swimmer can traverse deeper waters, swim for longer periods, and even learn advanced techniques. The process that once seemed daunting is now exhilarating and fulfilling—true Wu-Wei, where the action is effective and efficient with seemingly minimal effort.

Four IMPORTANT Wu-Wei caveats to avoid MISAPPLICATION and Confusion!

Caveat 1 - Wu Wei does not mean tolerating nonsense or agreeing to get beat up just because someone decides to beat you up. Wu Wei means if you do get beat up despite your best efforts, just accept that you were supposed to beaten up that day, buddy. Of course, I allow you to Wu-Wei your way to revenge, as long as you do it smoothly and harmoniously 😊

Caveat 2 - AVOID confusing Wu-Wei with harmful behavior that lead to pain later, like shortcuts that do more harm than good. You have to make the process effortless not just now, but do it in a sustainable long-term way. For example, robbing a bank may seem like an effortless and “Wu-Wei” way to make money now, but if you spend the rest of your life in prison as a result, the “Wei” isn’t quite “Wu”, bro.

Caveat 3: Don't always use Wu-Wei as a way to measure efficiency.

There are some states that people get into "called Flow states" where one becomes so absorbed in the work that they are doing. They may be working very hard in the eyes of others for a long time, but in their minds, time ceases to exist because they are so completely and effortlessly involved in the activity. You can work for 16 hours a day and still be in alignment with Wu-Wei as long as what you are doing seems effortless to you.

Technically you may not call it an efficient and time saving state, but it's probably the highest performance state you will ever reach. Wu-Wei is not always about being more efficient, sometimes it is about becoming so absorbed in performing and enjoying at the highest level, that the very concept of efficiency ceases to matter.

Caveat 4

You will say, you have a lot of things on your "plate", in other words you are very busy with a lot of things, so you can't be effortless or practice Wu-Wei. **Well, who told you to put all those things on your plate?? And what makes you think all those things are created equal?**

Except for specific areas where absolute perfection is necessary (like a bypass surgery or safety while preparing an airplane for a ride), much of the fields we work in will do just as well with focusing on what matters, and not focusing on everything!

If you are extremely busy it means two things,

- 1) You have decided to occupy yourself for the heck of it and feel directionless/worthless when you have less to do.
- 2) You are wasting time on things that you think matter, but really don't.

Many "system-sponsored" gurus want you to believe that you don't have time to do the things you really want to do, because you are being lazy or un-disciplined or slacking off.

The truth is that you don't have time to do the things that you want because you have been programmed by the same gurus, on behalf of the system, to waste all your time working extremely hard on things that don't

even do you any good, and made to feel guilty and useless if you try to reject their terrible advice.

In most domains, only 20 percent of the things you do will produce majority of the results. If you are serious about living a holistically pleasurable life, you will have to get rid of trying to be perfect in every area (**except on areas where near perfection is uncompromisable**) and primarily focus on the 20 percent of the things that give you the bulk of the results.

By the way this 80/20 rule is also applicable to your daily life in general. For example, you may choose to interact mostly with the 20 percent of people who contribute to the 80 percent of fulfillment or duties (in a job or business) of your life. You will realize the rest of the 80 percent is mostly filled with useless babble that eventually gives you nothing but wasted time, anxiety, depression, uneasiness and pure irritation in general.

Initially, you may need to interact with more people so that you find who is worth interacting with. But eventually you have to be ruthless in weeding out people who do you more harm than good.

This is also known as the Pareto's principle. The Pareto's principle is already a well-known principle so I am not going to go deeper trying to explain it. Do your own research once in a while 😊

PAUSE AND REFLECT ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TILL
NOW BEFORE YOU PROCEED.

The Search and Obsession For FAME: The Most OVERRATED Human Desire

When I was a kid, I was obsessed with fame. Why? Because everyone else wanted fame

Today, I have realized, I was a moron for being so obsessed with fame the way I was. But at the same time, it wasn't my fault. What do you do if fame is the only thing to be desired in society.

Everybody in society desires fame because everybody else in society desires fame, that's how we have been trained. Apart from that, there are few benefits to it, and one may argue that the harms outweigh the benefits.

Our collective yearning for fame isn't necessarily an innate human desire but rather at least a **somewhat learned behavior**, shaped by societal values and media influence.

The absolute FIRST song that I literally remember having heard in my life is the 1988 song, "Papa Kehte Hain" or "My Dad Says" featuring the debut of the Bollywood actor Aamir Khan.

I used to listen to this song often on TV as a 3-year-old. I remember, my parents also literally sang this song to me.

The first verse of this song literally translates in English to "**My Dad says, I will make a great name for myself, by doing something that is truly amazing!**"

That's when I was trained as a child that Fame was something to be pursued relentlessly.

From a young age, individuals are exposed to media glorifying celebrities, lionizing their lifestyles, and equating fame with success and happiness.

This constant exposure can create a feedback loop where fame becomes both a normalized and idealized state of being in society.

Sometimes though, fame, especially if pursued and acquired for the wrong reasons can do more harm than good.

In fact, I would go on to say that widespread fame and attention, without enough life experience and wisdom, is one of the most dangerous things that can happen to a person.

I am going to assume you have not read my book Unlearn and you are not aware of my past work, so let me briefly reintroduce my background at this time.

Once upon a time, when I had not rejected societal nonsense, I was brainwashed with it and was somewhat of a motivational bro myself.

Around 2008/9 I started working on a movie titled Carve Your Destiny, that ultimately took 6 years to make. The premise of this film was to interview a wide range of “achievers” from a variety of field to investigate made them successful.

Unlike Sir Hapoleon Nil who claimed to meet and interview various achievers for his philosophical masterpiece, “Don’t Think, Just Grow Thick”, a hundred years back, (**a claim that still has no real proof**), **I actually did it over a course of several years.**

So as a result of this, I started getting reasonable attention in the media. I was featured in a lot of the top print media outlets in India at the time and also on BBC Radio.

In addition to this, I also became a bit of a minor star online. Social-Media was just starting out during that time, and the space wasn’t as crowded as it eventually became. I used to write a lot of original “motivational quotes” that a lot of people enjoyed.

This combination received quite a bit of attention, **and I did experience some minor fame for a few years.**

Even with the minor fame, I received a lot of attention and respect from people who barely knew me. Initially, this felt gratifying and validating. I also thought I deserved it, after all I was creating something innovative and had worked so hard.

I got a lot of attention from people. People praised me as if I was the greatest genius in this universe after Einstein and naturally, I received quite a bit of attention from the opposite sex too.

However, I soon realized that this adulation was superficial and conditional. *Carve Your Destiny* released in 2014 and even though it technically got millions of views, it did nothing for my career, leaving me disillusioned.

All this effort of 6 years felt like it went down the drain for nothing. This was also the first time I started questioning the so-called success narratives perpetuated by society.

I stopped writing on social media out of frustration and decided to solely focus on making a living for a while.

Soon, the same people who praised me quickly moved on to the next trending personality, leaving me with a sense of emptiness,

The respect I received was not based on who I was as a person, but on a fleeting image, which was quickly replaced by someone else.

Let's examine why the obsession for fame is ultimately so pointless.

Fame as a mistaken metric for Happiness

Fame is largely an illusion—a mirage that many chase, mistakenly believing it will bring them happiness and fulfilment.

Fame is external and dependent on the opinions and attention of others, which are both fickle and fleeting. **Because these external factors are beyond one's control, relying on them for personal happiness and self-worth is inherently unstable.** Fame, in this view, is not a solid foundation upon which to build one's life or identity.

The psychological impact of fame can be severe. As individuals gain fame, they often encounter a dissonance between their public persona and their private self. This split can lead to identity confusion, where the famous individual struggles to reconcile who they really are with who they are expected to be.

To illustrate, let's consider the life of Marilyn Monroe, a perfect example of how fame does not equate to personal happiness.

Despite being one of the most celebrated icons of the 20th century, Monroe's personal life was filled with difficulties. Her fame, while immense, did not shield her from personal torment or dissatisfaction; instead, it often amplified her challenges by placing every aspect of her life under the relentless scrutiny of the public eye.

Monroe suffered from severe anxiety and depression, conditions that were worsened by the pressures of her career and the instability of her personal life. Her fame meant that every aspect of her life was commented on by the media and the public, leaving her with little privacy to deal with her mental health issues quietly or effectively.

The disparity between her public persona and her private self led to personal struggles. Her marriages, relationships, and personal interactions were often overshadowed by the overwhelming persona of "Marilyn Monroe," making it difficult for her to connect authentically with others.

Monroe's struggles show how fame can worsen personal vulnerabilities and lead to isolation, as those in the limelight often find it difficult to form genuine connections and trust relationships. **This isolation, coupled with the constant pressure to maintain a public image, can lead to tremendous unhappiness.**

Her untimely death, under circumstances that remain mysterious, was seen by many as a culmination of her ongoing struggles with her identity and the pressures of fame. **Far from bringing happiness, her story is an example of the destructive potential of fame on personal identity.**

The Disparity Between Fame and REAL VALUE

There is ALSO a distinction between public recognition and intrinsic personal value. Fame does not necessarily correlate with an individual's REAL personal worth or their contributions' significance. This perspective is especially relevant in an era where fame can be both highly sought after and widely misunderstood as a measure of true success.

The disparity between fame and personal value arises because fame is often based on public perceptions, **which are influenced by temporary trends**, media portrayals, and sometimes superficial factors that do not accurately reflect an individual's true qualities or achievements.

Personal value, on the other hand, is derived from an individual's character, their actual contributions to society, and their personal achievements and growth, which are often less visible and less recognized publicly.

Fame is ALSO subject to the whims and shifts of public opinion, media trends, and cultural biases, which do not necessarily align with the intrinsic quality or importance of one's work. It can be disproportionately bestowed or withheld due to factors unrelated to merit, such as marketability, timing, or sheer luck.

As a result, many truly significant contributions may go unrecognized, while less substantial achievements might be overly celebrated.'

The psychological impact of this disparity can be significant. Individuals who contribute meaningfully to their fields but do not receive recognition may feel undervalued or discouraged. Conversely, those who achieve fame but are aware of the superficiality of their public image might also experience a sense of unfulfillment.

When fame rather than actual value is rewarded, it can lead to an allocation of attention and resources that does not necessarily support the most beneficial or innovative work.

A historical example of this disparity can be found in the life of the artist, Vincent van Gogh. During his lifetime, van Gogh was largely unrecognized and considered a failure.

Vincent van Gogh was born in 1853 in the Netherlands and embarked on his artistic career around the age of 27. From the beginning, his work was innovative, characterized by bold, dramatic brush strokes and vibrant colors that would later become hallmarks of the post-impressionist movement. However, during his lifetime, these techniques were often not well-received.

Throughout his life, van Gogh sold only a handful of paintings. The art world largely ignored his innovations, and he was unable to gain the kind of patronage or gallery representation that could have provided him with a stable income or broader exposure. His work did not conform to the prevailing aesthetic norms, and as a result, he was considered a failure by his contemporaries.

After his passing in 1890, van Gogh's art gradually began to receive the recognition it deserved. Critics and scholars revisited his work, and exhibitions started to showcase his genius. The emotional depth and vibrant energy of his paintings resonated with broader audiences and critics alike, **eventually elevating him to the status of one of the most celebrated artists in history.**

Another example is the inventor, Nikola Tesla.

Nikola Tesla's life and career vividly illustrate the disconnect between fame and true success.

Despite his great contributions to science and technology, Tesla died relatively unrecognized and in financial distress, overshadowed by his contemporaries who were better at marketing their inventions or maybe just A LOT more ruthless, even if their real value was significantly lower than the public perception they managed to create. Of course, I am referring to **Light Bulb Tommy (Thomas Eddy's Son)**

Tesla was a visionary inventor and electrical engineer who made groundbreaking contributions to the development of alternating current

(AC) electrical systems, wireless communication, and many other technologies that are integral to modern life. His ideas were often far ahead of his time, which sometimes made them difficult for his contemporaries to understand or appreciate.

Despite his innovations, Tesla struggled with financial issues and recognition throughout his life. He worked on many projects that, though revolutionary, were not commercially successful or were abandoned due to lack of funding. His reluctance to engage in self-promotion and his indifference towards financial gain often put him at a disadvantage in a capitalist society that values profitability.

Ironically, Tesla's reputation grew substantially after his death, as later generations came to appreciate the significance of his work and its impact on modern technology. Today, he is celebrated as one of the greatest inventors in history—a massive contrast to the relative obscurity he experienced in his later years.

Both Tesla and Van Gogh's lives show that true "value" often transcends contemporary fame and can be more accurately measured by the lasting impact of one's work, instead of fleeting public fascination.

"The value of a man should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive." - Albert Einstein

Fame is more of a marker of randomness than of skill!

Fame is also bad judgment of skill. This is especially true for fame that is fairly recent in fields that are not contingent on skill but more on manipulation, politics and sheer luck and randomness. In these fields recent fame has almost no correlation with real value.

A multiple time Olympic Gold Medallist probably has tremendous skill in his/her domain, compared to most humans walking around, **but the average media celebrity almost certainly does not.**

Let me repeat an example that I have given in my previous book, *Unlearn: A Practical Guide to Business & Life*, just to show the inherent randomness in our lives that we fail to spot.

The analogy was called: Grains of Sand in a bucket

If you pour sand into a bucket, statistically, there will be some grains on the top, most in the middle and some on the bottom.

All grains can't be at the top.

So, does it mean the grains of sands at the top special/better than the ones at the bottom? Or is it just blind randomness at play?

The celebrities you are worshipping are no different than those grains of sands at the top. Someone had to win the lottery while someone had to lose. They happened to "win", **FOR NOW**.

In no other field is this truer than in the field of entertainment, and yet it also holds significant weight in almost all other fields including business, politics, art etc. and to some extent even science, since there are far more factors that decide the worth of a scientist in the public eye, apart from their actual contributions and skills.

For every famous inventor, one could name a hundred other scientists/inventors who deserved similar if not more accolades in their lifetime.

Moreover, you will see the following, In the fields of entertainment, politics, business etc. just being a child of an already powerful figure in those fields significantly raises your chances of "success" in that field, because "gaming" those is much easier than manipulating fields where actual skill is required.

This is less true in the other arts or sciences and the correlation generally breaks down in sports.

However, this doesn't mean sports is free of randomness. First one could argue that being extraordinarily talented itself involves a high element of randomness, not something you can choose to be born with.

And secondly, even in sports, there may be many ELITE, skilled people competing at the top, but who actually manages to win on that particular day often has more to do with chance than anything else, **especially if their competitors are equally skilled.**

However, still, if a sportsman is consistently performing at the top, you can rest assured that he/she is at least significantly more skilled than the average person (in that domain).

This is not necessarily true in a significant chunk of the other fields I have mentioned.

Fame as a Distraction and Distortion of True Self

Too much Public recognition can divert an individual from their true purposes, passions, and potentially even from their own sense of self.

This diversion is not just a matter of time management but also involves emotional and intellectual energy—dealing with criticism, managing a public image, and sometimes contending with misrepresentations or superficial engagements.

Ernest Hemingway, one of the most celebrated writers of the 20th century, provides an illustration of how fame can distract and even destabilize.

Hemingway's literary success began in the 1920s and exploded after the publication of "The Sun Also Rises" and "A Farewell to Arms." With fame, Hemingway became known not just for his terse, powerful prose, but also for his adventurous and tumultuous personal life, which often overshadowed his literary contributions.

Hemingway's early career was marked by a vigorous dedication to his craft. However, as his fame grew, so did the public fascination with his

persona—the rugged, often brash man who hunted big game, fished for giant marlins, and reported from war zones.

This public persona began to eclipse his literary output in the eyes of the public. Hemingway found himself playing into and even amplifying this persona, which often distracted him from his writing. His later works, while still significant, were often critiqued for lacking the depth and power of his earlier works. Critics and biographers suggest that the pressures of maintaining his fame, his image, and his public life took a toll on his creative energies and focus.

Hemingway's personal life was tumultuous, with four marriages, bouts of depression, and eventually, a decline in his mental health. His need to live up to a macho image and the relentless public scrutiny contributed to personal and professional decisions that strayed from his initial focus on writing as an art.

His life tragically ended with his suicide in 1961, a reflection of his internal struggles with fame, identity, and creative expression.

Fame can distort one's true self addresses a profound psychological and social phenomenon. The essence of this concept is that fame often requires individuals to present a persona that aligns with public expectations or the image that has contributed to their fame.

Over time, this persona can become dominant, obscuring or altering the individual's authentic identity.

The distortion occurs because public figures are often celebrated not just for their achievements but also for the characteristics that the public and media ascribe to them. This external perception can pressure individuals to conform to an idealized image, leading them to suppress or modify aspects of their true selves.

The process can be gradual and not entirely conscious, leading to a situation where one's public persona and private identity become misaligned.

The media often amplifies certain traits or moments that may not fully represent the individual's complex personality. Over time, this selective representation can become the dominant narrative about who they are.

To maintain their status and popularity, famous individuals might start modifying their behavior, choices, and even beliefs to better align with what earns them approval and applause, **even if it starts destroying them from the inside.**

The Pointless Quest of Maintaining Fame.

Fame is often perceived as a pinnacle achievement, a marker of success that once attained, will secure one's legacy and influence indefinitely. However, I want you to recognize the TRUE, fleeting nature of public attention and approval.

Fame is dependent on the collective memory and interest of society, which are both notoriously fickle. As new figures emerge and narratives shift, yesterday's icons can quickly become today's footnotes.

The ephemeral nature of fame can lead to psychological strife. Individuals who achieve fame often experience an "identity trap" where their self-worth becomes deeply entangled with their public persona and the continued validation that fame provides.

As fame wanes, which it invariably does, it can create a personal crisis or identity loss. This is well-documented in celebrities who have experienced rapid rises to fame followed by periods of public indifference or scrutiny.

Fame's transience is also worsened by the rapid pace of cultural and technological changes. In today's digital age, the lifecycle of fame can be extraordinarily brief—often termed as "going viral" and fading just as quickly. The speed at which information travels and interests shift makes sustaining public attention increasingly challenging.

Fame is not a static achievement but a dynamic state that requires continual effort to maintain. This maintenance involves consistently meeting or exceeding the public's expectations, which can be demanding, stressful and even financially draining.

The effort to stay relevant can divert attention from personal growth, relationships, and other pursuits that contribute to a well-rounded and fulfilling life.

Staying famous often requires continuous interaction with the media and the public, including regular appearances, interviews, and participation in high-profile events. This constant visibility can be exhausting and leaves little room for privacy.

For athletes, entertainers, and other public figures, there is an immense pressure to perform at peak levels consistently. **Any perceived slip or failure can lead to public criticism, affecting their marketability and status ALMOST OVERNIGHT.**

Thus, the obsession for fame is the most pointless of quests because fame itself is the most unstable of qualities. In general, it is far more unstable than health, wealth and one's close relationships, and certainly infinitely more unstable compared to a person's real skills developed overtime that can rarely be taken away.

With fame, today one person is in the news, tomorrow the world will be obsessed with someone else, the day after, with someone else. Fame can disappear almost instantly, skills with solid foundations almost never do.

If fame happens as a side effect of GENUINE contributions that you make, that's another thing, as long as you don't attach so much importance to it that you go into a depression when that fame goes away.

The True Rewards of Anonymity: A Philosophical Insight

What if I told you limited fame, or even anonymity might be better than extreme fame?

It allows for a purer, more authentic engagement with life and one's pursuits, free from the distortions and pressures of public recognition.

It is far more likely for a famous person to turn infamous than it is for a private person to become infamous, and when that happens, you may regret why you tried so hard to be famous in the first place

Because fame is the fire that can give you the illusion of warmth, when you are lonely, but it is also the fire that can burn you alive (at least mentally) if that fame turns to infamy and ridicule and you are not prepared to handle it.

The Benefits of Anonymity or at least "Limited Fame"

Freedom from Judgment: Without the constant scrutiny of the public eye, individuals can explore and express themselves more freely, experimenting without fear of criticism or failure.

Authentic Relationships: Interactions and relationships formed without the influence of fame are more likely to be based on genuine mutual respect and interest rather than on status or prestige.

Inner Peace: Living without the constant pressure to maintain a public image can lead to greater mental and emotional well-being.

Better focus on work: Anonymity allows individuals to focus on the quality of their work and personal satisfaction rather than on how it is perceived by others.

Actionable Advice for Understanding the Realities of Fame

Cultivate a sense of self that is independent of public acclaim. Invest in self-awareness and activities that affirm your values and abilities regardless of external validation.

Accept the transient nature of fame as part of life's natural experiences. This acceptance can reduce the disappointment or disorientation that might follow from fading fame. Understanding its potential fleetingness can help temper expectations and create a healthier relationship with public recognition.

Focus on work and relationships that have depth and meaning beyond public recognition. Engagements that impact others positively can offer a more lasting sense of fulfillment than fame.

Build relationships with people who recognize and appreciate your intrinsic qualities, rather than relationships primarily influenced by fame or status.

Engage in work that you find personally fulfilling and that you believe contributes positively to the world, rather than work that is aimed primarily at gaining recognition.

Again, in case I am misunderstood, I am NOT saying fame is bad. I am just saying pursuing fame SOLELY for the sake of fame is worthless.

Obsession for fame is toxic.

Fame, if it happens as a natural byproduct of value that you contribute is welcome, as long as it makes your overall life better, not worse.

If fame happens as a side effect of GENUINE contributions that you make (**or need to promote**) that's another thing, as long as you don't attach so much importance to it that you go into a depression when that fame goes away.

What I want you to remember is this: The real contributors to humanity and history won't be 99 percent of the **present-day celebrities** you follow on social media. The real contributors will be the one of the random people you probably passed by on the street without even glancing at them.

And finally, here are the words of the Buddha, on such frivolous searches.

"There are two kinds of search: the noble search and the non-noble search. And what is the non-noble search? Here someone being himself subject to birth seeks what is also subject to birth; being himself subject to aging, he seeks what is also subject to aging; being himself subject to death, he seeks what is also subject to death; being himself subject to defilement, he seeks what is also subject to defilement!"

Why "Societal Respect" is ALSO an Illusion

Just lose your standing once whether through your fault or factors out of your control and the whole world will begin treating as worthless or pretend you don't exist.

Any happiness derived out of societal approval is the most temporary and fragile form of happiness.

I have seen it myself in my past that when I was doing well in school, I had "friends" but the moment an authority figure started berated me and made me feel worthless, I became worthless in my so-called friends' eyes also. So, this so-called friendship and respect is also often status dependant.

However, I have already covered this story from my past in my last book, Unlearn, so I am not going to repeat it.

The point though is any happiness or peace of mind dependent on the love and respect of others is the most fragile form of happiness

Ironically, there was a time, just before the release of my documentary, when thanks to some media coverage and social media algorithms

favoring me at the time, I was kind of a minor social media star. So, as a result I also saw the positive side of "Societal Respect."

I have already explained what happened then. People make you believe you are the greatest living person on earth. But societal respect, at least in terms of a group's perception of you is also greatly fickle.

My father in his job rose to be the Executive Director, equivalent to CEO of the New Delhi branch of a Government of India company. He used to be extremely happy and love the respect he used to get from people.

Everybody used to run after him and listen to him and it seemed the love was genuine. When he was sick or even if a family member was sick, everybody from the company used to visit him.

Of course, he attributed to the hard work and reputation he built for himself.

The very next day he retired though, the very same people who used to run after him stopped taking his calls and began avoiding him. The drivers who used to be ready to go everywhere, refused to visit on the very next day of retirement.

A so called "friend" he had made in work, since his early days in the department, a friend who used to appear to be with him through thick and thin, never even called him once in the several years that have passed after retirement.

All of this stuff, this respect, people running after you after your designation, can vanish in an instant, **and the problem is not the vanishing, the problem is when your happiness is contingent on external respect, because then depression is certain.**

The two primary lessons are:

- 1) Never get so addicted to attention that you can't live without it.

- 2) As far as possible, keep yourself financially strong or at least independent, no matter how much love you get from others, because the loss of financial independence is probably the biggest correlator with how others treat you. If you have money coming in today, be grateful for it, and don't think it will come forever, but if you can retain some of that money, you can retain some of your self-respect. **And ultimately, self-respect is what really determines your happiness.**

Even the “winners” of the world were often treated horribly by the same world.

In the 80's Michael Jackson's skin color slowly started changing to white. This made people think that he didn't want to be a black person. But the primary reason behind this was that he had a skin disease called '*Vitiligo*' which causes the skin to lose its melanin and gives it a bleach-looking effect.

He underwent various treatments and plastic surgeries to even out this effect and even had to put on a lot of makeup to hide the discoloration.

People accused him and bullied him that he was not proud to be a black person and wanted to be white, but they had no idea about the health problems he was going through.

This public criticism had a severe impact on his mental health as well.

His nose slowly started changing its appearance as well. People again thought it was because he wanted to get a sharper, “white nose.” But he stated that the real reason was that while he was performing, he fell and injured his nose very badly. He underwent surgery to repair it. Unfortunately, that surgery was unsuccessful and it made it hard to breathe.

Because he had not only physical but also psychological problems, he insisted on more and more surgeries that completely ruined the appearance of his nose.

At the age of 25, he had a freak accident where his head caught fire recording the Pepsi commercial. He was left with second-degree burns and bald spots all over his head. So, he had to undergo reconstructive surgery once again.

Even with many health issues in his body, he made many successful albums and remained a superstar.

But Michael couldn't feel any luxury and richness as a celebrity because his childhood was not pleasant. He wanted to relive his childhood where he would only have good memories his childhood, so he started a private amusement park called Neverland.

Neverland was named after a fictional world which had characters like Peter Pan and Tinker Bell. It was a land where people never grew up. Jackson, wanting to relive his childhood, created a private amusement park based on the same themes.

He invited many children and spent time playing alongside them whenever he was free.

At this time the media and people were very cruel towards him. Many accusations were levelled at him saying that he was abusing kids. The media also started treating him as if he was a criminal and court cases were filed on him.

However, despite the hate, Michael Jackson did not lose his kindness. Whether he was loved or hated, Jackson remained humble and kind-hearted throughout his life, never forgetting the importance of treating others with respect and compassion.

Furthermore, even when the world and media was treating him unfairly, Jackson was a dedicated philanthropist and used his platform to help those in need.

In 2005, Jackson was acquitted of all charges and accusations thrown at him. He never returned to his ranch and started living abroad for a while.

A bad childhood, bad health, media trials and personal relationships breaking down broke him completely. He became extremely sad, and was alone, far from the people, and started consuming sleeping tablets and *Propofol* which is used as anaesthesia.

As he was using it more and more, his health was damaged further. He slowly became weak and couldn't breathe properly.

On June 25, 2009, the world eventually lost the king. Michael died at the age of barely 50.

Now they portray him as a God.

What's the point when everyone was so cruel to him when alive?

Society didn't even spare the greatest pop star of our times, and you expect it to be forever kind to you and I?

What is my ultimate point?

Don't be overly dependent on anyone else for your happiness.

Whenever you feel you are too dependent on someone else for your happiness, just shut off everything and sit alone by yourself.

Slowly, if you make this a regular practice, it may take days or it may take weeks or months to realize, **but you will realise, at least to a certain degree, being alone isn't that bad.**

In fact, it could be a good thing.

Would you know what you look like if there were no mirrors or cameras?

Consider the peculiar relationship we have with mirrors. Sometimes, when you're looking in the mirror, try closing your eyes and ponder this: without mirrors, how would you know what your face looks like? In a way, it's the mirror that gives you your face

Extend that idea to photographs, which also reflect how we appear, solidifying our image of ourselves. Now, imagine a world without any mirrors or cameras or any reflective surfaces. If such things didn't exist and there was nothing to reflect your image back to you, would you still know what you looked like? Of course not.

Similarly, there is the inner self, our inner core being that we truly do not know because there is no mirror for us to see it in daily life, so ironically, we go through our ENTIRE lives without knowing our inner self. How sad is that?

Thankfully, there is a solution to it. You may call it meditation, contemplation, introspection or just sitting alone with yourself.

Just as a mirror will reveal your outer self, meditation or at least sitting alone with yourself, with your thoughts and having no gadgets to distract you will slowly reveal your inner self.

WITHOUT Sitting alone and being disconnected from time to time, there is almost no way you can truly know your inner self.

Let me share a passage from the Upanishads that are ancient Indian philosophical scriptures.

"It is not for the love of the worlds that the worlds are dear: it is for the love of the self that the worlds are dear. It is not for the love of the gods that the gods are dear: it is for the love of the self that the gods are dear. It is not for the love of beings that beings are dear: it is for the love of the self that beings are dear. It is not for the love of the all that the all is dear: it is for the love of the self that the all is dear."

"It is the self that must be seen, heard, thought of and meditated upon: by seeing, hearing, thinking of and understanding the self" – The Upanishads

This passage explains that all external forms of love, such as love for a spouse, children, wealth, or societal status, ultimately stem from the love

of the self. In other words, the capacity to love others authentically and unconditionally arises from a genuine love and appreciation of oneself. This understanding reframes relationships as opportunities for mutual growth and support, rather than sources of dependency or validation.

While relationships and worldly pursuits may bring temporary fulfilment, true and lasting happiness can only be found by having a deep connection with one's inner self.

Furthermore, the Upanishads also say.

"Any person who knows this is himself the Prajāpati of sixteen portions who is the year. His wealth is the fifteen portions: his self is the sixteenth portion. Only in his wealth does he wax and wane. The self is the hub of a wheel, wealth the rim. So even if he loses everything, but himself lives, they say, 'He has got off with the loss of a wheel-rim.'"

Within this metaphorical framework, the individual's wealth is likened to fifteen portions, representing the material aspects of life such as possessions, achievements, and external success.

On the other hand, the self is described as the sixteenth portion, signifying the essence of one's being beyond material wealth.

The passage employs the metaphor of a wheel to illustrate the relationship between the self and wealth. The self is compared to the hub of a wheel, representing its central and essential role in life. In contrast, wealth is likened to the rim, symbolizing the external and peripheral aspects of existence.

Even in the event of losing external wealth and possessions, if the self remains intact, the individual is considered to have endured a loss equivalent to the loss of a wheel-rim!

IMPORTANCE OF BEING ALONE FROM TIME TO TIME

You may be afraid of being alone or suffering from loneliness. What if I tell you that you have ALWAYS been alone your entire life regardless of how many people physically surrounded you?

There is no such thing as a SINGLE, shared reality.

Everyone's experience of what they consider "life" is 100 percent unique to them.

My memory of how life began for me is completely different from yours. *In fact*, even if we literally grew up in the same household and were twins, our memories would still be completely different, **because life as we remember it depends on the experiences we remember, which are vastly different from individual to individual.**

Even a collective activity of ours will be remembered differently by me compared to you because I was in a reality where I was looking at you and you were in a reality where you were looking at me.

Suppose we are in a restaurant sitting in opposite chairs. I will remember it as looking at you and talking to you while eating a specific kind of food sitting on that specific chair and seeing what is in front of me and behind you.

You, being on the opposite side of the table, will remember the reality as seeing my face, seeing what is in front of you and behind me (that I cannot see.) You may also remember different points from the conversation that I remember.

Thus, even a collective experience, is a largely unique experience in the memory of the individual. **Nobody else, but that particular individual experienced it.**

When you sleep, "existence" ends for you alone. For everyone else, their individual existence continues, in a completely unique form for each individual.

I am not here to give you an existential crisis. I am here to remind you that solitude is not something to be feared or run from.

You came alone, you will die alone **and the reality you are living in is, in fact, YOURS ALONE**. Why not learn to be a little more comfortable and happier being alone?

How to Stop Depending on Others for Happiness – The PHILOSOPHY OF EPICTETUS

For newcomers to philosophy, let me introduce you to a man named Epictetus.

Epictetus was literally born as a slave in ancient Greece and spent all his life in slavery until he was eventually freed.

If there is anyone from whom we can actually learn how to maintain our happiness even when literally surrounded by misery, it is him.

By the way, as a disclaimer, let me add that I do not believe that philosophy can bypass natural human needs or emotions, however, it can help you see things in a different light so that you at least understand that what you think you depend on is not necessarily what you actually need.

Now let's go back to Epictetus. Epictetus never wrote a book but he founded a school where he preached to followers.

His sayings were letter written and preserved by his followers and survived for over two millennia! Let's explore some of the things he said, with regards to coming to peace with ourselves and with my commentary on it.

Quote 1 - "Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding of one principle: Some things are within our control, and some things are not. It is only after you have faced up to this fundamental rule and learned to distinguish between what you can and can't control that inner tranquillity and outer effectiveness become possible."

This quote of Epictetus was also the opening line of my first book - **Unlearn: A Practical Guide to Business & Life**, and for good reason. Unless we learn to differentiate between things that are under our control and what is not, there is simply no way at peace.

In today's society we have been made to believe that the most famous or rich is necessarily the most hardworking and necessarily the most able. We have been made to believe that the person with most influence has simply "willed" their way into massive influence SOLELY by their own efforts.

This myth completely discounts that much of what happens in life is actually not under our control. We may or may not have free will, but we sure as hell do not have over control over a lot of things happening to us, no matter what the positive thinkers say about them having created their own fate.

Those who claim they have created their own fate, by the same logic, must have also created their own birth! 😊

Sounds exaggerated? It isn't. Fate begins with birth!

Hey! why not explore this further?

Now, for their birth in this form, their parents would also have to be born and meet.

For their parents to be created their grandparents would also have to be born.

For the grandparents to created, some great great great ancestors had to be born who happened to be apes.

For those ancestors to be created, life would have to evolve on earth. For that to happen the solar system would have to be created and so on...

If you take this to the extreme, ultimately, for someone to be accurate in their assertion that they completely created their own fate, it means they were the one who created the Universe and the Big Bang.

I guess they must be God. Let us all pray to them.



Some super positive thinkers who are still deluded with the idea of entirely controlling their own fate, will say well say we create our fate AFTER we are born.

Well, what if some disease killed them a few days after they were born? Did they create that fate of theirs? Those who say they completely create their own luck, what if they get randomly hit tomorrow by a truck?

Keeping all absurdities aside, unless we can come to terms with the fact that, some things are under our control and some things aren't, no matter how much effort we put in, we can never be at peace with ourselves. And without peace, happiness is impossible.

Quote 2 - "We are ultimately controlled by that which bestows what we seek or removes what we don't want. If it's freedom you seek, then wish nothing and shun nothing that depends on others, or you will always be a helpless slave"

Although it is clearly easier said than done and, in some cases, it may not even be practical, let's understand what he is saying.

He says, as long as what we want or do not want depends on other' wishes, whims and fancies, we will remain controlled by them.

And when you are controlled by others, there is no way you can be free, because your entire sense of well-being depends on other individuals who have their OWN way of thinking. You may try to persuade them to think your way but ultimately, they will make their own decisions.

So, Epictetus says that if you want peace and freedom, stop obsessing over things that depends on others.

Furthermore, he goes on to say, if you are in a situation that you DO NOT want, that happened because of someone else and there is NOTHING you can do about it anyway, (for example how he was enslaved), then don't even shun that and accept it as a part of your life AT LEAST for the time being.

In some ways this also aligns **with the saying Latin saying “Amor Fati” or “Love of one’s fate.”** However, instead of “loving” one’s fate which may not necessarily be love-worthy and sounds more like toxic positivity, a more realistic alternative in my eyes is coming to terms with one’s fate or accepting it at least for the time being

But Acceptance also does not mean necessarily mean Resignation. It doesn't mean you shouldn't plan a way out, especially if it is possible, but if you are forever feeling sorry for yourself, you can never get into an emotionally stable state of mind to come up with a solution anyway!

Quote 3 – “Don’t long for others to see you as sophisticated, unique, or wise. In fact, be suspicious if you appear to others as someone special. Be on your guard against a false sense of self-importance”

Here Epictetus makes a really crucial point. He says, don't long for others to see you as someone special, in fact, be alert when someone gives you excessive praise and inflates your ego.

The first part of his saying is hard to implement, as most of us see ourselves as special and naturally we want others to see us as special too. So, while we may get rid of the obsessive desire to be seen as important, at some level, fundamentally there is almost no one who would dislike praise.

The second part of his saying is actually more crucial – being on guard when someone gives us excessive praise and inflates our sense of self.

There are two problems when someone gives you excessive praise.

- 1) The person themselves may not be genuine and has a hidden agenda.
- 2) Even, if they are genuine "fans" who literally see you as God, the problem is if you are only surrounded by them, you are going to see yourself as above the laws of nature too, and the moment that happens, your doom is imminent.

I know of an individual who started off as extremely humble and the quintessential "focused worker." He was lucky enough to get the fruits of his labor too, earning both considerable fame and wealth.

Unfortunately, with that came an entourage that started treating him like a God that could do no wrong. Soon, he was surrounded by all kinds of ill advisors who not only gave him bad advice, but fed his ego so much that he actually started believing he was above everyone else. As a result, he got involved in all kinds of shady activities and truly believed nothing could touch him.

One day his luck ran out and he ended up unwittingly committing a serious crime for which he was eventually jailed. From being seen as a hero, he turned into a criminal.

You may think this is a one-off story, but there are literally thousands of cases like this. So, if you do get attention, be grateful for it but don't start believing the rules suddenly do not apply to you anymore.

Quote 4 – "Don't make the mistake of assuming that celebrities, public figures, political leaders, the wealthy, or people with great intellectual or artistic gifts are necessarily happy. To do so is to be bewildered by appearances and will only make you doubt yourself."

If you wish to be thoroughly convinced that everyone except you is a winner and you are the only loser in the entire world, you only have to do one thing - spend your whole life following "influencers", most of whom are faking their own lives.

They maybe faking it on two levels. Number one, their whole success maybe fake, or it may be built upon a lie.

In the less common cases where their so-called success is actually real, do not forget that there are multiple dimensions to success.

There is freedom of time, freedom of will, mental peace, freedom of money to actually enjoy, good health, happiness in terms of relationships. If you have all the money and fame in the world, but missing the above, you will have a hard time being happy.

Here is another brutal fact though, even if one has all the above, they can still be extremely unhappy, because sustained happiness is not an easy thing to maintain.

Ask anyone who has genuinely “made it” in life if they are happy. You will be surprised to know how empty many of them and dissatisfied many feel in their lives, **especially if they are not philosophically and spiritually grounded.**

They struggled all their lives to seek happiness, only to realize that once they achieved all their goals, they suddenly had nothing else to do.

A self-professed public example of this is the sportsman, Abhinav Bindra, who struggled all his life to want to win an Olympic Gold medal.

He finally managed to achieve this in 2008. After the win he was greatly praised by everyone and became the darling of the media. Soon though, he became more depressed than ever, because after he had actually won the medal, he had no idea what to do in his life next.

A life with zero struggle is like playing a video game with all cheat codes on, exhilarating at first, but extremely boring soon after.

What Science tells us about mental well-being

"I hope everybody could get rich and famous and will have everything they ever dreamed of, so they will know that it's not the answer." – Jim Carrey

I agree with Carrey, first hand. While I have obviously never seen fame or wealth to the degree that he did – **I have seen them both to a tiny but significant enough degree to realize that beyond a point, they are both dead ends for happiness, for me at least.**

I saw minor fame back in 2012-2014, the consequences of which I have already shared with you.

I have also seen some degree of financial freedom, fairly recently. While I am extremely grateful for the opportunities it has opened up for me and would never want it to go away until I live, guess what, I have realized even that hasn't brought me sustained happiness. **It has only brought in a sense of relief to some degree, that's all.**

To be clear, I am NOT saying that you should not pursue fame or wealth, they both have their benefits too, especially if you are reasonably wise and not overly obsessed, but sustained happiness is not one of them.

Why is that? Why is it that when you get, even to some degree the very things you wanted, after a while, they stop affecting you the way they did?

The answer to this lies in neuroscience.

Let's switch from philosophy to some hard facts grounded in neuroscience and psychology, based on the knowledge we have in 2024. **This is of course further simplified for a broad audience.**

Now, a person's wellbeing ultimately has a lot to do with their brain's neurochemistry.

What does this mean? Every animal's brain produces certain chemicals, also known as neurotransmitters that have a huge influence on their moods.

Some of these chemicals are dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, endorphin, cortisol, norepinephrine and so on. There are many more neurotransmitters, but the point of this book is not to teach you everything about neuroscience but to help you understand the basic facts you need to know in order to live a better life. So we are only going to focus on four.

Dopamine – Primarily your pleasure hormone

Oxytocin – Primarily your “love” hormone

Serotonin – Primarily your “relaxation hormone”

Endorphin – Primarily a hormone that helps you feel better after pain

Whatever you are feeling at ANY specific moment is more or less a result of interaction and balance between a variety of these neurotransmitters, **WITHIN** your brain.

While fame and wealth could give you initial happiness because it releases the “pleasurable” hormones. After a while, your brain stops secreting them and what used to be able to create these pleasure hormones subsides and you are back to your normal levels again.

This is why you keep trying to chase bigger and bigger highs, thinking that will finally solve the problem of happiness. The problem is seemingly solved, but only for a while. Eventually what used to be “WOW” becomes the new normal and fails to produce an effect, unless you try to push things further. Clearly this is a race that has no end.

In a way it's your body's way of resetting itself, because too much of a good thing for too long can be a bad thing and the body already knows it. If you still don't believe me, in a particular study, rats given constant access to cocaine eventually ended up killing themselves trying to seek constant pleasure.

Your ability to cope with this brutal world depends A LOT on an ideal balance between these neurotransmitters in your brain. If they go out of imbalance for too long, that can wreak absolute havoc on your mental

health and subsequently your well-being, no matter how much philosophy you read.

While there are ways to boost these neurotransmitters through medicines, particularly if you have a specific illness, that is out of the realm of my advice.

I am only going to focus on ways on the known, natural ways to regulate these neurotransmitters.

Of course, it has been simplified for a lay reader, the functions are a lot more complex than just what's been mentioned below!

Dopamine – Increases when you have certain kinds of foods, listen to music you enjoy or anything you have “fun” doing. Also increases when you pursue targets you enjoy pursuing.

Oxytocin – Usually increases when establish a bond with someone you love or like. Also increases when you see something cute, like a little puppy.

Serotonin – Makes you “calm, at peace and at ease.” Any activities that relax you and calm you down, whether it is meditation, reading a relaxing book (probably not this one), having a relaxing bath and so on.

Endorphin – Primarily increase in response to pain, but that doesn't mean you should chop your hands off. Moderate exercise is usually a much safer alternative.

Here is the reason I am sharing this with you. Philosophy is a great thing, but it cannot bypass biology. Sometimes no matter how well you know something intellectually, it won't make you feel better.

No matter how smart we pretend to be, fundamentally we are still animals controlled by nature. So, it is important to work with nature, not against it. Remember Wu-Wei?

So, to retain your sanity in this brutal world, here are a few key points you need to remember.

1) Keep Switching it Up

Even the work that interests you the most can get boring if done in the same routine like monotonous way every single day. Even the work that you hate can become interesting if you figure out ways to make it interesting and randomize things. The truth is that no matter how productive people say that routines are, no one will deny that after a while they get boring as hell.

When you do something new that interests you, your brain secretes dopamine, a neurotransmitter which gives you the feeling of being excited and happy. When you do the same thing again and again and again in the same way, it can be the most interesting thing in the world but it slowly starts becoming less exciting.

Luckily you can trick the mind by doing the same thing in a different way.

Suppose you are a writer who wishes to write a book. In the beginning you are excited as you start but soon creativity goes down and you feel like you are stuck in a rut. What do you do then? Maybe you can write when you feel like it, maybe you can do the write at a different time of the day, maybe you can go out and get ideas by observing the environment around you.

Maybe you can decide to write whatever the heck you want to write one day and then remove the nonsensical portions when you feel like it. When you mix things up, things become exciting to the brain and “hard work” becomes a lot easier.

You can also “bounce” between projects when one tires you out or bores you too much and then come back to the original later, when the second one begins to bore you.

I do this myself. To hell with “discipline, focus, persistence, perseverance and rigid schedules” that give me a mental break down. **Benny Franklin, I reject your way, I am happier with the way of Wu-Wei.**

2) - Frequent small pleasures make you feel better in the long run compared to large infrequent pleasures.

Why? Suppose you have a hugely joyous unexpected event. You feel exhilarated and amazed, nothing like this has ever happened to you so far. It's the absolute best experience of your life so far. The rush you felt was unexplainable.

Now consider this, let's say nothing like this ever happens again in your life. Your life goes back to absolutely normal once again after a while. You will forever be hoping for something like this to happen again, because that gave you a massive dopamine rush for a while, only to never happen again. But because it doesn't happen again, you will be frustrated and upset, and perhaps perpetually stuck in the past.

Consider the other situation, you don't receive such a huge joyous event ever, but somehow, at regular or at least relatively frequent intervals, you keep getting events or circumstances that make you relatively happy. You never got the huge dopamine rush, but over the course of your life, the second instance is going to maintain the dopamine balance in your brain and consequently your well-being much better, in the long run since it happens over a long period of time.

In even simpler terms, a diet of 1500 calories a day for a week, is healthier and feels better overall than a single meal of 20,000 calories.

3) Happiness is relative, not absolute.

A multi-millionaire founder facing the wrath of investors every single day who threaten to kick him out, will be unhappier than a clerk who feels they are in control of their environment.

A person who earns a million dollars a year but lives in an area where everyone is a billionaire WILL BE MISERABLE, because to him or her, she will be the poorest of the bunch and knowing human nature, it is also possible that even someone earning a million dollars a year could feel insecure or actually be treated with disrespect in such a neighbourhood.

Someone who earns less but lives in an area where everyone he/she is at least at par with everyone else, if not better, will have a BETTER sense of well-being compared to the multi-millionaire who is constantly trying to feel accepted in the bigger boys' club.

It's a popular saying of today that "your network is your net worth", which implies, the richer your network, the richer your personal wealth will be.

But I will repeat it again - **sometimes your net worth is inversely proportional to your network**, because in the very race to create the illusion that you are "equal" to or better than everyone you are hanging around, you may make some massive, rash career and financial decisions, that then destroy whatever good you had already.

One thing is for sure though, even if your financial net worth is sometimes proportional to your network, beyond a certain "ideal" point, your mental net worth is almost always inversely proportional to it.

*"We are happy in proportion as our range of vision, our sphere of work, our points of contact with the world, are restricted and circumscribed. **That is why the blind are not so unhappy as we might be inclined to suppose, otherwise there would not be that gentle and almost serene expression of peace in their faces.**" – Arthur Schopenhauer*

One ancient philosopher who has significantly influenced me is Epicurus. Epicurus is frequently dubbed the philosopher of pleasure, but ironically, his concept of pleasure diverges sharply from hedonism or the pursuit of constant bliss.

Instead, Epicurus says that true pleasure lies in the absence of pain in the body and turmoil in the soul. In essence, what he defines as happiness or pleasure is fundamentally peace—seeking to avoid physical pain and emotional distress.

When Epicurus talks about pleasure, it's not about engaging in activities that provide an immediate high only to result in discomfort later. For

example, getting drunk might seem pleasurable at the moment, but the ensuing hangover transforms that pleasure into pain.

According to Epicurus, any pleasure that leads to subsequent pain greater than the pleasure itself, is in fact, detrimental.

This philosophy resonates deeply with me. I believe that life's purpose isn't about constant suffering nor relentless hedonism, as both extremes ultimately lead to pain. **If you can indulge in moderate pleasures—choices that bring peace and do not result in significant pain later—then those actions are beneficial.**

Conversely, activities that may seem pleasurable today but cause pain tomorrow should be avoided. This Epicurean wisdom is not only practical but also aligns with my approach to life.

When I was in my Teens and in my twenties, I could eat anything and experience the pleasures associated with them without many consequences, except maybe gaining weight. Today if I eat anything junk, I gain weight quickly. Once that happens it doesn't take long for body parameters to go out of the normal range, and once that happens it doesn't take long for health problems to appear.

So now my life is slowly becoming more about minimizing pain rather than experiencing continuous pleasure.

And this is going to be the trajectory for most people. Those who still prioritise only pleasure as they grow older will inevitably develop a whole lot of problems mentally and physically. **This does not mean you forego pleasure totally, not at all. You only avoid pleasures that later give you pain, or at least manage them in a way that minimizes pain.**

Examples of “Bad” Pleasures that could lead to intense future pain
 Excessive consumption of Junk Food
 Excessive Consumption of Liquor, tobacco
 Consumption of Narcotic Drugs

Getting so obsessed with materialistic luxuries that you become devastated if you lose them.

Excessively hanging around people who may sound like “fun” but will then trap you into all of the above.

“Good” Pleasures without future pain or minimal future pain.

Productive hobbies that give you happiness.

Having friends and relationships that are in alignment with your nature.

Enjoying “materialistic” luxuries without being overly attached to them.

Basically, being okay, even if they are not there.

Indulging in entertainment that relaxes you as long as it does not turn into an addiction.

Healthy and tasty food.

Traveling to places you dreamt of.

A good night’s sleep (Unless you work the night shift, then you’ll be fired)

Why You Should NOT WAIT to Enjoy the Good Pleasures of Life

Everyone loves to talk about the importance of delayed gratification and how one must learn to tolerate what even what they hate and postpone the hopes of happiness for years into the future. That is taught to be the secret of success.

I read recently about a guy who was 46 years old and was looking to cash out of his stock investments to enjoy his life today. He asked for advice from random people on the internet, who of course considered themselves no less than ultra geniuses on finance.

The most popular advice he received from these financial geniuses was that he should set a goal to wait till 60, because then the money would grow and he would REALLY be able to enjoy his wealth.

First of all, because of the very nature of the stock market, there is NO GUARANTEE that his wealth would have grown 14 years later, it could actually grow very insignificantly or even go down. There are plenty of examples of the same and I don’t need to repeat myself.

Secondly and more importantly - my question is - What are you going to do with a goal and persistence/perseverance that takes 30 years to manifest, if it does at all?

If enjoying the fruits is your goal behind doing an activity, you will probably be long dead or be close to sitting in a wheel chair by then.

Let me illustrate this through a story.

The novel, "The Tartar Steppe" by Dino Buzzati tells the story of Giovanni Drogo, a young and eager officer assigned to his first post at Fort Bastiani, a remote garrison overlooking a desolate desert landscape that seems to stretch infinitely. The fort's purpose is to guard against a potential invasion by the Tartars, a mysterious and fearsome enemy believed to exist just beyond the desert.

From the moment he arrives, the fort's atmosphere of waiting and vigilance grips Drogo. The fortress, perched on the edge of vast emptiness, is consumed by the anticipation of an attack that never seems to come. The soldiers' days are marked by routine: standing guard, watching the horizon, and maintaining the fort, all under the heavy weight of a silent expectancy.

Drogo initially plans to request a transfer after a few months, hoping to return to a more active military life. However, the peculiar charm of the fort and its mission slowly captivate him. He decides to extend his stay, telling himself that the encounter with the Tartars would be a pivotal moment in his life, **a chance to participate in a glorious battle that would define his career and give his life meaning.**

Years start to slip away almost imperceptibly. Drogo watches many of his friends and colleagues leave the fort, either transferred to more desirable posts or retiring from military life. New soldiers arrive, full of the same initial enthusiasm that Drogo once had, only to find themselves caught in the same cycle of waiting.

Over time, the endless vigil takes its toll on Drogo. The desert, the fort, and the vast sky become his world, while the life he had imagined for himself—the city, a family, a different career—slowly fades from his aspirations.

As Drogo grows older, his health begins to deteriorate. Isolated and distant from the life he once knew, he remains at the fort, sustained by the shrinking hope of the Tartars' attack.

FINALLY, the moment arrives! The Tartars approach, and the fort springs to life in preparation for the battle. But by this tragic twist of fate, Drogo is too old and ill to participate. He is sent away from the fort to seek medical care.

In the final chapters of the novel, Drogo leaves the fort for the last time. As he travels away from the place that defined his existence, he reflects on the years spent waiting for a day that, now arrived, he can no longer partake in.

Drogo dies in a small inn, alone and far from the battlefield, as the sounds of the battle he had longed to join echo faintly in the distance. **He misses the defining moment of his life—a moment that comes too late, rendering his sacrifices meaningless.**

This tale is a meditation on the nature of time, ambition, and the human condition. It speaks to anyone who has ever found themselves postponing life for a future that, once arrived, might not hold the fulfillment they anticipated.

Drogo's story is a powerful reminder of the dangers of waiting too long for a life that may never align with one's dreams and expectations. It challenges readers to consider their own waits and what they might be missing while looking too far ahead.

The novel, therefore, is not just a tale of military life or of waiting for an enemy, but a profound commentary on human life and aspirations.

Like Drogo, many of us find ourselves stuck in our own versions of Fort Bastiani, caught up in the rat race, waiting for grand events or achievements that we believe will justify the wait or give meaning to our lives. We postpone living in the present for a future that might never unfold as we imagine.

*"While life is yours, live joyously;
None can escape Death's searching eye
When once this frame of ours they burn,
How shall it ever again return?" –
Charvaka Philosophers (Ancient Indian Materialists)*

OVERCOMING MAYA or "The Matrix"

I am going to share with you a story of a Mathematician named John Nash. Perhaps some of you may have heard of him, but if you haven't, by the time you finish reading this unusual story, you will have tremendous respect for the man for what he achieved despite his severe problems.

John Nash was always intelligent as a child. In fact, he was so brilliant, he managed to get into the prestigious Princeton University in the 1950's.

Over there he shared a room with a person called Charles Herman. Charles Herman didn't interact with other students but was fun to be around. Soon Nash also met Charles' niece Marcee.

Unfortunately, Nash wasn't able to find a topic for his doctorate at the university because he was looking for an original idea that never seemed to come to him.

His professor met and told him that his record was unimpressive and the university wouldn't place him anywhere. Nash was disappointed. It was

then that the professor took him to an event that was happening at the university.

There was an elderly gentlemen seated at a group meeting and then all the professors in the university came to him and laid their pens on the table, where he was seated. It was a mark of respect in the academic community given to someone who had the achievement of a lifetime.

The professor then asked Nash what he saw. Nash said he saw recognition. The professor said, **he should see ACCOMPLISHMENT not recognition.**

Nash then got completely focused on doing something worthwhile. Charles Herman and his niece Marcee were there with him during that time. It was then that he developed a mathematical concept useful in economics that would change his life.

The classical economic theory said that the best result would be derived if every person did what was best for himself. Nash, upon observance of an incident concluded that the chances of getting best results for everyone would be when everyone did what was best for the group.

His goal was to actually derive a mathematical formula to ensure nobody lost even in competitive situations. This formula would be extremely useful in negotiations and high conflict situations. **He actually managed to derive it! It was called Nash Equilibrium and he wrote a paper on the same.**

He showed the paper to his professor and immediately the professor exclaimed that it was a true breakthrough! With a remarkable discovery of this magnitude, he could get admission anywhere!

He was promptly given a prestigious placement. His research was so revolutionary that he even got covered in Fortune magazine as one of the brightest mathematicians of the day.

Around the time, he met a person called William Parcher, who said he was representing the CIA, intelligence agency of the USA. Parcher asked Nash to help him decode secret mathematical messages from Russians.

He started spending all his time decoding things, to the point that he even began ignoring his main job and his family. Soon he became extremely suspicious that Russian spies would assassinate him for decoding the secret messages they were transmitting.

One day a group of people followed him. He felt they were Russian spies. He attacked the leader and then tried to run away. It was then that the group caught him and gave him an injection to sedate him.

When he woke up, he yelled at them to free him. But turns out, they weren't Russian spies. They were psychiatrists.

They told him that he was suffering from Schizophrenia, a psychotic disorder. They told him that he was having **false imaginations** of decoding messages on behalf of the government.

He then saw that William Parcher, Charles Herman and Marcee were sitting there and tried talking to them. The head psychiatrist asked him who he was talking to. He said he was talking to the three people sitting on the chairs.

But the Psychiatrist said, there was no one on those chairs! William Parcher, Charles Herman and Marcee were hallucinations (life-like imaginations created by the mind) and not real people!

Nash's entire world turned upside down!

At the time mental illness was so poorly understood and treated that they simply did not know what to do with the patients. He was thrown into a psychiatric hospital and suffered for years. He was given electric shocks and what not, but he did not improve.

Finally, after an agreement with his family, he was released but his condition had worsened tremendously. He continued interacting with the hallucinations and believing what they said. His relationship with his wife had worsened and he left his job.

Part of the problem was that his disease made him continue to believe that the hallucinations were real and he was not convinced by his wife and friends who told him they couldn't see them.

But somewhere, his logical mind was still intact because eventually he deduced that Marcee couldn't be real - she never got older or taller!

With the proper realization that the three people he was interacting with were hallucinations and not real, he decided that he was not going to let them control his life.

He decided that no matter what happened he would not interact with the hallucinations he encountered. At first the hallucinations pleaded, then they taunted him and tried to scare him. But no matter what happened, no matter how real it felt, he kept telling himself they weren't real.

It was an intensely painful process. He pushed himself to get back to work and teaching. Students mocked him for his erratic behavior when he was trying not to react to the hallucinations. But he decided he would not entertain the hallucinations and would not let them interfere in his work.

Slowly the disease's control over his life lessened. This was a process that took years. The hallucinations were still there but slowly their grip loosened, because he learned to ignore them as far as possible, and he was able to come back to working regularly in the real world.

Unknown to him, his methods were similar to what is now a medically recognized therapy called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and is used to treat mental illnesses. But at the time, nobody even knew of it!

As he got better, he continued to teach and work on his theories that he had worked on for several years in the past.

Eventually, Nash's work was recognized to be so significant in a real-world scenario, that he was visited by a gentleman from the Nobel foundation who informed him that he had been nominated for the Nobel Prize in Economics!

After this announcement, as John Nash was sitting in the coffee house with that gentleman, all other professors stood up from their chairs and one by one, laid their pens in front of him as a mark of respect for an achievement of a lifetime, just like Nash's professor had shown several decades ago!

Life had come a full circle. John Nash ended up winning the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1994 and became an inspiration to millions.

A movie on his life – A Beautiful Mind was released in 2001 and it ended up winning 4 Oscars!

You see, our lives are actually not that different from the experiences John Nash went through. **What he experienced was an individual delusion, and what we all experience every day in our daily lives, is a COLLECTIVE DELUSION.**

This delusion is called MAYA. It's a phenomenon described in ancient Indian philosophy where we are unable to distinguish the illusory natures of the world from its underlying reality.

The closest synonym for Maya, for Western Readers would be the "The Matrix", similar to the 1999 Hollywood movie of the same name.

But just like Nash, amongst all the noise, distractions, delusions and difficulties, once someone helps us become aware of the Maya, when we ourselves put two and two together, just like John Nash did when he realized Marcee did not age.

Also, just like Nash, if we can focus on what's important and ignore all the illusions looking to keep in an endless, worthless and pointless cycle, we too can end up having a pretty good life, without even needing to escape the Matrix, but just being MORE AWARE of it.

Now, **some things are real and some things are a part of a collective delusion like countries and money.** We believe in them because everybody believes in them. To not follow that means you can't feed yourself or will end up in prison. So, to live practically you need to follow those delusions. **But why are we still buying into other delusions we absolutely can reject?**

We are all schizophrenics in a way, and while we can't turn off the delusions/hallucinations, we can be more aware of them and choose to live consciously. Let's explore how we can protect ourselves against these widely believed "hallucinations" or "Psychological Traps".

Protection against Common Psychological Traps of MAYA and Manipulation

PSYCHOLOGICAL BIASES

Confirmation Bias:

Confirmation bias is a psychological phenomenon where individuals favor information that confirms their existing beliefs and reject the information that does not.

We tend to seek out, interpret, remember, and share information in ways that affirm our preconceptions. This can lead to skewed perspectives and, often, poor decision-making.

The classic case of confirmation bias is our ABSOLUTE belief in our own religious dogmas.

It has led to so much pointless bloodshed and massacre that if the person doing it just thought about questioning it critically for once, they would have realized how absurd it was what they were doing.

CONFIRMATION BIAS is also the biggest enemy of all scientific progress.
Because we only wish to see reality from the lens we prefer, not the lens that is accurate.

Mechanisms of Confirmation Bias

People are inclined to search for information or interpret evidence in ways that CONFIRM what they already believe and ignore all evidence to the contrary.

Even when presented with the same information, individuals might interpret it in a way that supports their own views.

Finally, people tend to more easily recall information that confirms their beliefs than information that challenges them.

Historical Example: The Trial of Galileo

Galileo Galilei, the renowned Italian astronomer, physicist, and engineer, was one of the pivotal figures in the scientific revolution. His support for heliocentrism, the model that posits the Sun at the center of the universe, put him at odds with the prevailing geocentric views supported by the Catholic Church, which held that the Earth was the center and immovable.

In 1610, Galileo strengthened his case for heliocentrism with his observations made through a telescope, a groundbreaking invention at the time. He observed phases of Venus and the moons orbiting Jupiter, which could not be explained by the traditional geocentric model. Despite this compelling evidence, the Church officials chose to focus on scriptures and interpretations that supported the Earth-centered universe. This selective acknowledgment of evidence is a classic display of confirmation bias.

The Church officials not only ignored or dismissed Galileo's findings but also retaliated against him. In 1616, the Church formally declared heliocentrism to be "foolish and absurd in philosophy, and formally heretical." Galileo was warned to abandon his support for this theory. This situation escalated until 1633 when Galileo was tried by the Inquisition.

During his trial, Galileo faced judges who were deeply entrenched in the geocentric view. **The evidence he presented was systematically scrutinized and interpreted through a lens that sought to disprove or diminish its validity.** This bias was not just against the scientific evidence, but also rooted in the desire to maintain theological and doctrinal authority.

Galileo was found "vehemently suspect of heresy" and forced to recant his views. He spent the rest of his life under house arrest. This episode is a example of how confirmation bias—rooted in the human fear of uncertainty and change—can lead to the suppression of revolutionary ideas and stifle intellectual progress.

The story of Galileo teaches the importance of remaining open to new information and perspectives, especially those that challenge our deep-seated beliefs. To reduce confirmation bias, individuals and institutions can adopt practices like:

- Seeking out and listening to opposing views.
- Using blind and double-blind methods in experiments to reduce subjective influence.
- Encouraging a culture of questioning and critical thinking.

Confirmation bias is a robust and pervasive effect that can distort our understanding of the world in subtle yet profound ways. By studying historical examples like Galileo's trial, we can learn the dangers of this bias and better understand how to counteract its influence in our personal and professional lives.

Survivorship Bias

Survivorship bias occurs when we focus on few “winners” who won, following a particular process, and assume the process to be the reason for the victory, while completely ignoring the vastly greater number of “losers” who lost following the SAME process.

Let us assume the classic example where it is assumed that persistence or, worse mere thinking and visualization leads to success.

For every person who has “succeeded” at a goal whose outcome is anyway out of their direct control through persistence, (for example wanting to become a popular movie star), **there are thousands if not millions who have failed using the same approach.**

Yet, it is portrayed and even sincerely believed that the only reason that person “succeeded” is because of their persistence and everyone else had no willpower and gave up too early.

Newsflash - there are millions of people who are literally “never giving up” till the day they die. And they pretty much get nothing to show for their

“persistence”. Don’t tell me they had no willpower or that they quit too early.

A classic example of Persistence alone leading to success are generalized statement pushed by the likes of Light Bulb Tommy (**Thomas Eddy's Son**) and Sir Hapoleon Nil (Whose actual insights on “success”, practically speaking were indeed close to Nil)

Far worse are those who claim they succeeded because of “visualizing their goals.” This is the current nonsense spewed by motivational literature.

If 10,000 people visualize something and a few of the visualizers happen to achieve the goal, while 9995 did not, it does not mean visualization led to the goal being achieved. Probability dictates that somebody has to win. You happened to win and also happened to visualize. Don’t confuse correlation with causation or at least, don’t mislead everyone by spreading nonsense that your visualization led to your success.

There is a story about W. Clement Stone, a pupil of Sir Happy Nil, who also happened to be a multimillionaire via selling insurance. W. Clement Stone was once walking around, literally wearing a cape, declaring to everyone in his company that **his huge bank balance was a result of his positive mental attitude.**

One of the senior employees (Alan Weiss, who later became a legendary consultant in his own right) told him that he had a huge bank balance and that is why he had a positive mental attitude.

Weiss also said, if everyone in his company had a big bank balance, they too, at least to some extent, would have a positive mental attitude.

Of course, he was fired on the spot.

More Everyday Examples of Survivorship Bias:

-Entrepreneurs might look at thriving companies without considering the many startups that failed under similar circumstances. This can lead to an overly optimistic view of entering a market or adopting a business model that, statistically, holds higher risks of failure.

-Investors might be influenced by the most successful stories in the stock market, such as those who made fortunes from tech stocks, without considering the many who lost substantial sums. This could lead to risky investment strategies without a realistic assessment of potential downsides.

-In personal success, we often hear about individuals who dramatically rise to fame or fortune from humble beginnings and try to emulate their paths. However, for every one success story, there may be thousands who did not make it, not necessarily due to lack of effort or talent, but perhaps timing, luck, or other external factors.

Insight for Avoiding Survivorship Bias: To counteract survivorship bias, it is essential to:

Actively seek out information about those who did not make it to understand the full scope of any endeavor or historical account.

Whether evaluating past events, business strategies, or personal goals, consider both survivors and non-survivors to gauge accurately the chances of success and the factors influencing outcomes.

Be skeptical of narratives that only highlight success. Question what might be omitted and consider alternative sources of information to get a more complete picture.

Dunning-Kruger Effect

The Dunning-Kruger effect is situation in which people with limited competence in a particular field, greatly overestimate their competence, usually because they don't have much self-awareness.

Let me again narrate a story from the classic Indian Epic- Mahabharat. To illustrate this.

To make this easy to understand for unaware western audiences, I will simplify the story as much as possible.

Yudhistir, the eldest of the 5 Pandava princes ("the good guys" in the story) was a highly virtuous person but had one major vice, he was a gambling addict.

The Kauravas, who were their cousins (and "the bad guys" in the story) became jealous of the Pandavas when they saw their beautiful Palace and decided to take them out by exploiting Yudhistir's weakness in gambling.

They sought the help of Shakuni, who was an uncle of the Kauravas, and an expert Gambler himself, who often played with loaded dice to manipulate the outcomes.

One day Shakuni and the Kauravas invited Yudhistir to a friendly game. That day Shakuni intentionally **let Yudhistir win game after game after game to give him false confidence that he was an expert Gambler**. He also praised him greatly after the win and inflated his ego.

Yudhistir started believing that he was an expert gambler and no one could defeat him. After some time, Shakuni again invited Yudhistir and the entire group of Pandava princes to another gambling game.

This time, bigger things were to be put on the line. Yudhistir who had his ego already falsely inflated from the previous game, agreed immediately. By the way, because he was the "eldest" of the bunch, none of his younger siblings had any say in the matter, thanks to the concept of blind reverence to elders, deeply entrenched in their minds.

Shakuni and Yudhistir began the game. This time, Shakuni (who we know played with loaded dice) won game after game after game.

Yudhistir who thought of himself as an expert gambler could not understand why he was losing. He put everything on stake to prove his superiority

He started by putting bags of gold coins and jewellery on the line. After losing that, but believing in his competence (perhaps motivated by some Napoleon Nil of his era), **he decided not to give up**.

He then put his entire treasury at stake. He lost again. One by one whilst playing again and then losing again, he lost his entire army, and then his

palaces, and then finally put his own brothers, wife and himself on the line, leading to them all becoming slaves.

In a span of few hours, from being a king of a major region, he and his entire family became slaves, all because of the delusion that he was an extremely competent and skilled gambler.

This in a nutshell, is the Dunning-Kruger Effect.

Sounds familiar in modern life?

Mechanisms of the Dunning-Kruger Effect

Those with limited skill in a domain lack the ability to correctly assess their own skills.

Individuals misjudge the skill levels of their peers, typically assuming they perform better than others when they do not.

Example: Amateur Investors during the Dotcom Bubble

The late 1990s saw the rise of the dotcom bubble, a period during which stock prices in predominantly internet-based companies soared due to excessive speculation. This era attracted many amateur investors who believed they could achieve substantial returns on investment by buying stocks of any company associated with the internet, often without understanding the fundamentals of the stocks they were buying.

Lured by tales of staggering returns from new tech startups, many inexperienced individuals started investing in the stock market. Their lack of experience in financial markets did not deter their confidence; buoyed by a few initial successes (often due to market trends rather than wise choices), they believed they had a natural skill for investing.

As more and more unseasoned investors entered the market, stock prices were driven to unsustainable levels. When the bubble burst in 2000, it led to significant financial losses for these investors. Many had not diversified their investments, understanding little about risk management or the economic indicators that professionals use to assess stock viability.

These amateur investors typically lacked critical financial literacy skills necessary for stock market investing. They were not aware of how to analyze a company's fundamentals, such as its cash flow, debt levels, and revenue growth, which are crucial for making informed investment decisions. Instead, they relied on hearsay and the irrational exuberance of the market.

Lessons and Mitigation Strategy

The only mitigation strategy for Dunning-Kruger effect is learning and more learning. **Because the more you learn, the more you realize what you do not know.**

The learning also has to be from the right sources, not random videos on social media. **I would always advise you to learn from the classic books of each field, first and foremost.**

Read books that were written to last long, not those that were written to sell fast. Read books that were written to stand the test of time, not those that were only written to hit bestseller lists.

Also, the Dunning-Kruger effect is more visible in people who are easily manipulated in general, perhaps because of a lack of self-awareness or naivety.

It is thus extremely important to be aware of and spot manipulative in others when you encounter them. Otherwise, no matter what you do, your life would be screwed.

The next section will deal with the same

Dealing with the “Manipulation” Element of Maya

Manipulation can be done by a single person or it can be done by a whole system or society. But again, no matter who the perpetrator is, the power of manipulation to completely screw up your thought process and life is well documented.

In fact, you may be the most “evolved” person in the world and still be prey to manipulation.

Even in the case of immensely respectable GENUINE Spiritual Leaders, inevitably corrupt people join their organization whose main motive is their own self-interest and pursuing power at the cost of anything, not necessarily propagating what the Original Guru said.

Remember even Jesus had Judas who betrayed him, and Buddha had Devadutta who tried to kill him.

Ironically, even if you yourself are a philosophically and spiritually grounded person, you still have to guard yourself from others around you, because you may think the world is a beautiful place, but the world itself doesn't act that way.

This is why you need to be aware of common manipulation techniques TO have a basic degree of protection for yourself, your loved ones, your peace of mind and ensuring clarity in your decisions. Let's take a look at them.

Propaganda and Fear-Mongering in Politics

Fear as a political tool is a classic tactic of manipulation, where leaders or political entities exaggerate threats to influence public opinion and control societal actions. This approach capitalizes on the natural human response to fear—seeking safety and certainty even at the cost of freedoms or rational decision-making. The following narrative explores how political figures use fear to consolidate power and manipulate public perception.

Exploration of Political Fear Manipulation

Let's explore the FICTIONAL nation of Veridia. As you will see, this template is seen over and over again in different countries and different eras, simply because it works so well. It is also absolutely certain to work well in the future.

In the fictional nation of Veridia, President Eldridge (obviously a made-up character, don't Google him!) faced declining popularity due to economic challenges and rising public dissatisfaction.

To reassert control and distract from domestic issues, Eldridge began a campaign focusing on external threats—imaginary enemies plotting to destabilize the country.

Through fiery speeches, government-sponsored news, and orchestrated public demonstrations, Eldridge and his administration propagated the narrative of imminent foreign invasion and internal enemies working to overthrow the established order.

This campaign painted a dark picture: **Veridia was a nation under siege, surrounded by enemies both foreign and domestic.**

The relentless barrage of threatening images and dire warnings led to a climate of fear and paranoia among the populace. The fear of losing national stability or becoming victims of alleged conspiracies drove citizens to rally behind Eldridge, who promised security and strong leadership in these turbulent times.

Criticism against him was silenced, labelled as unpatriotic or treasonous, further stifling opposition.

Analysis of Manipulative Elements

Exaggeration of Threats: Eldridge exaggerated and sometimes fabricated external and internal threats to invoke a siege mentality among the populace.

Us vs. Them Rhetoric: By creating a clear divide—us (the homeland and its people) versus them (the external enemies and traitors within)—Eldridge simplified complex geopolitical and social issues into binary choices, manipulating emotions.

Control of Information: The administration's tight control over media ensured that the public received a continuous stream of fear-inducing propaganda, which was rarely questioned or countered by alternative viewpoints.

The fictional account of President Eldridge illustrates a real-world tactic **frequently observed in political landscapes around the globe.**

By recognizing when fear is employed as a manipulative tool in politics, citizens can take proactive steps to question the narrative and seek independent information

Understanding these manipulation tactics empowers individuals and societies to make decisions based on informed judgments rather than manipulated emotions.

By the way, the idea of being blindly patriotic is one of the biggest delusions, because the concept of countries itself is a delusion.

Every animal thinks they control their territory. Dogs feel they control their territories, ants think they control their territory and attack other ants fiercely to control that territory. Humans think we control our territories.

In reality, we control nothing, because the only true control over that territory is that of nature itself.

No countries actually exist in the nature, it's only power struggles amongst humans that created the concepts of kingdoms and countries and borders, and by the way, those borders keep changing every few years.

So, if you are extremely patriotic about your "Country", but then some politicians/armies get together, and your region becomes completely independent of what used to be your country, who do you owe your allegiance to now? The newly created country or the old country?

If you say "new country", what if it gets divided again thanks to a bunch of politicians, within a few years. Who do you owe your loyalty to now? The new "new country", the old "new country" or the old, old country? As any sane person can see, this is a never-ending game, created yet again by politicians and societal structures and extreme **nationalism/jingoism** is the propaganda they need to peddle to control the population of that region.

PS: Some people will naturally twist my comments, I want to clarify that there is nothing wrong with being patriotic in a healthy way.

Humans are social animals and we all are meant to be part of groups that give us a sense of belonging, security and oneness. **There are UNDENIABLE benefits to being a part of one.**

Just don't let yourself be manipulated by those who use it as a technique to guilt you. Do not become a blind follower of ANYBODY.

The Relentless Pushing of "Ideologies"

Understanding Ideological Manipulation

Ideologies are sets of beliefs used to understand the world. But when these ideologies are pushed too hard, it can lead to manipulation. This kind of manipulation happens in politics, social movements, and even marketing. People or groups often promote certain ideologies not just to benefit society, but to gain something for themselves.

Who Creates These Ideologies?

Ideologies are often developed by powerful people or groups wishing to control the public thought process. They can be large activist groups, political parties, big companies, or special interest groups.

These groups can benefit from having many people adopt their way of thinking. They usually hide who's funding the ideology, trying to make it look like it's a grassroots movement — something that came from the common people. They then take control of a segment of the media to relentlessly push their ideology

How Are These Ideologies Spread?

These beliefs are shared everywhere — on TV, in newspapers, on social media — everywhere you look. This makes the ideology seem like it's everywhere and accepted by everyone, which can make more people start to follow it.

Influenced by these, you join certain communities that again turn out to be filled with strict adherents to this new ideology and your thought process gets corrupted further and further. Ironically, you are given the illusion that you are becoming super smart and exercising free choice, while the truth is far from it!

Once you join a community, there's a lot of pressure to accept these ideologies. **Messages often say that if you want to be seen as a good person, you should adopt these beliefs.** This can make people who don't agree feel left out or even like they're bad people.

Because these ideologies are shown so much in media, it can seem like everyone agrees with them. This isn't always true, but this illusion can stop people from seeing other points of view.

In some places, old-fashioned ideas about family roles are heavily promoted by local groups that benefit from keeping things the way they are. People who follow these old rules are often praised, while those who don't are criticized.

Sometimes the OPPOSITE is done: "New and Revolutionary" ideologies are shoved down your throat. It seems it is being done for your benefit, but again it is truly being done by and for the benefit of the powerful groups or people funding it.

You are also manipulated and guilted, through various forms of media, social media and groups that can quickly become "**echo chambers**" (so that you hear the same thing again and again) and make you feel that ALL good and responsible people in the world believe in the new ideology and everyone else is either a fool or cruel or a less evolved species.

Let me share a real example. It's as respectful as possible but if someone chooses to get offended anyway it is their problem – there is a

school today that is forcing kids to paint their nails in support of people from the “LGBT” community.

Now, you can respect a black guy without painting your face black. You can respect an Indian without faking an Indian accent. So why can’t you respect someone else’s personal choices without being forced to dress like them to show “allegiance?” And you are doing it to kids?

Kids are not considered old enough to vote, they are not considered old enough to consent to drive or to drink or to do any of the adult things.

So how are they considered old enough to “consent” that are literally being shoved down their throats? And if they don’t accept it, they are ostracized.

Their whole life becomes a struggle for acceptance and they have no choice but to accept what the “teacher” says, or become a social outcast in their school.

How to Recognize and Resist Ideological Manipulation

Think about where your information comes from and question why someone might want you to believe a certain thing. Is there someone out there who benefits from you adopting this belief?

Look for different sources of information to get a broader view of the topic. This can help you see beyond the echo chamber of a single ideology.

Always remember, your first responsibility is to YOURSELF and not a group or an ideology no matter how much you are brainwashed to adhere to it or given the illusion that every “good” or “intelligent” person believes in it.

How modern society has “manipulated” you into ruining your health

Have you ever observed, when you have a prolonged high fever, even the best food will taste horrible and the best vacation destinations will be unenjoyable. You won't be able to watch any movie or play a video game.

Any kind of relationship will be more irritating than pleasurable. The things you enjoy the most in life, will begin to repulse you

What's the takeaway? Your capacity to ENJOY ANY PLEASURE OF ANY KIND is COMPLETELY CORRELATED WITH YOUR HEALTH

One of the most common ways you are guilted into ruining your health is through overwork, as if you are doing some holy duty by doing it for the system, or maybe even saving the universe.

Once you are sick because of excessive work, the payment for the same will also have to be borne primarily out of your own pocket when you go to hospitals.

So, you spent decades trying to get some money, then you ruin your health and give up the same money to try and come back out alive.

Isn't it better that you relaxed in the first place so that you don't have to destroy your body prematurely for a system only for the same system to take back all the money in the form of hospital bills, at least not prematurely??

Now, most health books of today go way too much into the technical stuff and talk about the latest studies, whose conclusions keep changing every few years.

They forget the simple solutions, which in fact have the biggest impact for the lowest resources involved, and instead choose to focus on the complicated and unverified, which is not only hard to manage, but will bankrupt an average guy financially. **Can't blame them though, how else are they going to sell books?**

In reality though, instead of Supplementation and thousand things to add to your diet to improve your health, what's far more important and far simpler to track, is what you are REMOVING from your diet, in a sustainable way

My FIRST suggestion is to stay away from all highly addictive and harmful substances that lead to greater pain than the pleasures they give.

(Remember – “bad” pleasures are the ones that lead to great future pain) This includes cigarettes, alcohol and all forms of narcotic drugs.

Again, I am no body to tell you how to lead your life. All I am suggesting is, as long as you are using them, not only are you going to harm your body you are also going to greatly cloud your mind.

By the way, I forgot to mention the most legal, widespread and insidious harmful drug of them all, one that pretty much the whole world is hooked on. Kids these days are pretty much raised on it.

It is something I was hooked on for the longest time too and that is “Junk Food”, especially processed Junk Food.

I belong to the first processed junk food generation of India. Before my generation, while Indians may have had their desserts and all, the processed junk food that the fast-food companies sell wasn't really available much.

But processed junk food was entering the market as I began to grow up. Slowly but surely, I acquired a taste for them. First it was the Pizza, then burgers and then fried chicken, then lasagne and so on. Before you knew it, I was a certified junk food lover.

In my twenties, all of this did not make much of a difference. But as I began to approach my thirties, and certainly once I crossed it, I started suffering from a host of physical problems and my blood reports started going out of control. On the blood test there were, high cholesterol and triglycerides, high Liver values etc.

From a physical perspective, they were Allergies, Acid Reflux leading to throat pain, Gastritis, nerve pain, amongst other things and I was acquiring a new health problem every year for sure.

Initially I associated it with aging but then I realized that while I was not a kid anymore, I was not some wrinkly old dude already either, there was something more to it.

On top of that, it became extremely hard to manage my weight. While earlier, I could have some junk food and not worry too much about weight, now it seemed it was extremely difficult to control it.

When I finally got my blood reports once again, I saw that my cholesterol and liver values had become even worse and I was acquiring new symptomatic problems regularly. I had already stopped drinking alcohol a few years ago so this was quite surprising. I consulted a doctor who said it was most probably a fatty liver caused by junk food.

I had never heard of liver damage being caused by something other than alcohol before this was quite surprising.

Every day, the irritating hypochondriac in me (health anxiety that just won't shut up) told me that my liver was most probably finished already and I should probably write up a will.

But I will credit that hypochondriac for turning my life around, as it was the first time that I swore to myself if it was indeed processed junk food that was damaging my overall health, I would get rid of it one way or the other, despite having consumed it my entire life.

In fact, I will say that giving up junk food was indeed the first step in turning my life around both physically and mentally.

But first, let me again examine what had happened so that I can somehow connect the dots. As I have mentioned, I have had processed junk food from probably around the time I was 11 or 12 years old, but you see it was not so easily accessible. You needed to physically go to the store to buy it and you also had to have enough money to be able to buy whatever you wanted.

This actually put limits in terms of how much junk I was actually consuming. As I hit my twenties, the consumption increased somewhat and while I am sure the insidious signs were already appearing, but I still managed my weight somehow.

But see, something started happening around 2018. Not only was my metabolism beginning to slow down, and I also had some disposable income by now. But here is what I consider the final spark in the fire – **The sudden appearance of Food Delivery applications.**

Before you actually had to go to the store, and me being a lazy guy in general, didn't actually like going and dining at these food outlets that much. I may have gone once a month maybe. But with the appearance of food delivery applications, a whole new world opened. Any kind of amazingly tasty (and harmful) food was available now at the fingertips.

Not only did I not have to go visit restaurants, I had a huge choice to order from now and the money to buy stuff, please these applications kept sending me so many notifications every single damn day that they were hard to ignore.

I recently read about a CEO from a well-known food delivery company talking about how he lost a lot of weight by disciplining himself and cleaning up his diet. He wrote it to give the rest of us “motivation.” Clearly, he realized the harm of a bad diet for himself, if not for the rest of the population, **because his application through its one thousand cellphone notifications a day** has probably done more than anyone else in the recent past, to make Indians fat and unhealthy.

Anyway, thanks to the appearance of these apps, what was used to be a once in a month outing, become a twice in a week occurrence. So suddenly I was now eating junk food 7 to 8 times a month. **Then Covid happened**, and any little physical activity you may have had before stopped, and literally everything started happening via delivery.

And now, a guy who had no processed junk food before the age of ten, infrequently in my teens, a little more frequently in my twenties because of having personal income, and a hell of a lot more frequently in my

thirties because of the appearance of all these applications, it was not surprising to me to see where all these health problems “SUDDENLY came from!”

After spending a year on a moderate diet (which was basically about avoiding junk food as far as possible, not adopting ANY extreme fad diet) I had reduced quite a bit of weight and the frequency of my health problems significantly diminished. Even the frequency of long-standing physical health problems like acid reflux absolutely diminished.

Having personally, largely given up junk food, I can ABSOLUTELY and CONFIDENTLY attest to the fact that a cleaner diet will reduce a significant percentage of your health problems, provided you stick to it lifelong and not just for weight loss. **They will COME back if you revert back to junk.**

Sure, as you age further, new problems will inevitably come up, but even if your diet can delay them, you are doing yourself a favor and you are not exactly making any sacrifice, because by avoiding/delaying health problems, you have ensured the absence of pain for as long as possible, which according to Epicurus is the real true pleasure.

Some people will say, life is unpredictable, you could be a super healthy eater and still suddenly develop some serious disease or get hit by a car and die, or die out of old age anyway. So, what's the point of a healthy diet? **My answer is Sure, but at least you would have ensured a minimally painful life until that happened**

Now here is a common objection I hear when people doubt that junk food actually ruins their health that much - **“But Warren Buffett and Charlie Munger ate junk food all their lives and lived to be 90 plus!”**

Indeed, both Buffett and Munger have often indulged in dietary choices that would make a health enthusiast pale—Buffett with his love for Cherry Coke and hamburgers, and Munger with his penchant for a good steak.

Both Buffett and Munger not only managed to build vast fortunes in the financial realm but also seemed to have won what might be called a

genetic lottery, enabling them to enjoy prolonged health despite their culinary indulgences.

So some people say Buffett and Munger ate badly, but still lived to be so old so a bad diet is acceptable. **Well Warren Buffett and Charlie Munger were also extremely lucky, and nature was extremely kind to them. That's why they also became billionaires.**

Donald Trump also eats terribly and is going strong as of now. but then he escaped almost unscathed from an assassination attempt that would have killed 99 percent of people. **This my friend is LUCK.**

Has life been kind enough to make you a billionaire or lucky enough to survive assassination attempts that would have killed almost anybody else?

If not, then don't stretch your luck.

Financial Manipulation Techniques Used to Rob you off your money

Relentless Promotion of Debt

Financial manipulation through the relentless promotion of debt leverages sophisticated marketing strategies to create a false sense of financial empowerment.

The promotion often creates an illusion of affordability, making it seem that high-cost items are comfortably within one's financial reach through small, manageable payments.

Credit card companies and retail stores often promote consumer credit or store cards with phrases like "Buy now, pay later" or "Interest-free for 12 months." These promotions highlight the ability to obtain desirable items immediately without paying upfront, playing down the ACTUAL costs and financial risks.

Mechanisms of This Manipulation

Creating Illusions of Affordability: Marketers focus on low initial monthly payments to overshadow the total cost over time, including high-interest rates that kick in after introductory periods.

Exploiting Aspirational Desires: These strategies exploit the consumer's desire for immediate gratification and the lifestyle aspirations that many people have, suggesting that owning the latest products is within easy reach through debt.

Normalization of Debt: Debt is portrayed as a normal and essential financial tool, suggesting that smart consumers leverage credit to manage their lifestyle and financial aspirations.

A typical example is a car dealership promoting low monthly payments for a new car with phrases like "Drive it today for just \$199 a month." The focus is on the small monthly outlay, making the car seem affordable and the purchase decision easier and immediate. The long-term financial impact, including total interest payments and the total cost of the car after all payments, is minimized or hidden in the fine print.

The first step to become more independent of society's thinking is to become financially less dependent on it. But the current financial world is designed to keep you dependent on it. **And the easiest way to keep you dependent is to trap you in high interest loans that are easily available to you. They are called credit cards.**

The only thing credit cards are good for is added security and ability to make recurring international transactions easily. Any other reason is a trap.

Credit cards trap you into believing that you can afford something when you really can't.

When you pay a big sum out of your pocket, there is an emotional pain involved. So, you think about your purchase and don't unnecessarily buy things you don't really need.

But there is little emotional pain when making small monthly payments, at least in the beginning!

So, you end up buying ten such items without thinking much.

Eventually you end up accumulating many things that you realize you didn't really even want or need!

The pleasure of owning these items is long gone and the only thing you are left with is the stress of paying them off.

Let's not even talk about cashbacks and reward points. In exchange for getting a credit card to get a two percent cashback, you are looking to pay up to a 42 percent interest rate annually, depending on the card, if you mess up.

No investment in the world can ever increase your wealth if you are stuck in a 42 percent debt that compounds annually.

And further, guess what the financial companies WANT you to mess up. You might confidently believe that you will pay off the money in full every time. But that's the trap.

If you don't mess up today, you will mess up in the future, especially if you are in an emergency, don't have savings in the bank and desperately need the money.

It is then you will take the decision to use your card to pay for an emergency. Because you didn't have money in the bank in the first place, you won't be able to pay the full amount and will get stuck in the trap of paying the minimum amount.

And this is you get trapped in the vicious cycle of high debt and paying one loan by taking another loan.

That's the game. So never even think about using a credit card if you don't have considerable money for emergencies already saved up.

**Where else do you think the banks reward you your points from?
From others like you who messed up.**

Debt has a way of feeling less real than actual money, and that illusion makes us do dumb things. In one study, researchers asked people to bid on tickets for a sold-out basketball game. When participants were told they'd have to pay in cash the next day, they offered about \$28. But when another group was told they could pay with a credit card, their bids jumped to \$60—more than double for the same tickets.

And here's the kicker: these weren't random people off the street. They were MBA students at a top business school—supposedly the best and brightest financial minds. If even they were tricked into spending twice as much because they'd be paying with credit instead of cash, it shows how easily debt can cloud judgment. If future financial experts can be so easily swayed, what does that say about the rest of us?

And the worst part is, this doesn't just hurt those who decided to pay by debt but even those who want to stay away from it because it raises prices for EVERYONE, without an increase in Wages!!

More Debt Fuelled Financial Manipulation in Real Estate

Imagine you've got just \$200,000 and you're eyeing a house worth a whopping \$1 million. To make this dream a reality, you go ahead and get a home loan for the remaining \$800,000. Sounds like a smart move, right? Not so fast. Here's where things start to twist.

First off, in a scenario where everyone can get their hands on cheap and easily available credit, the price of homes just keeps skyrocketing. What was once affordable is now priced outrageously, all thanks to the flood of loan money pouring into the market. So even before you've signed the dotted line, you're already caught in an inflated bubble.

Now, let's play out two scenarios:

Best Case? Not Really: Say the house value shoots up to \$5 million—sounds like a jackpot, right? But hold your horses. If you decide to sell this goldmine, sure, you pocket a cool \$4 million profit. But guess what? You need a new place to live, and unless you're downgrading or moving to a cheaper area, any comparable house is also going to cost you a fortune thanks to the same inflated prices you just benefited from.

So, unless you have multiple properties and are serious about treating real estate as a business, actively looking for opportunities for reinvestment in underexploited areas and have the time/resources to manage those investments, you are mostly chasing a fool's gold. The average homeowner who "invested" in the house they live in is just running around in circles.

This is not to say homeownership isn't important. It gives you a sense of security, but only if the bank collection agents aren't at your doorstep every month because you defaulted on the huge loan you took. Remember the bank is still the real owner of the house, until you pay off your loans 😊

Worst Case, You're Stuck: Now, if the market tanks and your \$1 million home dips to \$900,000, you're in a real pickle. You still owe the bank a ton of money, and now it's on a house that's worth less than what you paid. Meanwhile, the bank? They're still collecting interest, sleeping easy while you sweat the mortgage payments.

In both cases, who's the real winner? The bank. Always the bank. They lend you massive amounts, sit back, and collect interest while you gamble on property prices. If you win, you barely break even when you buy again, and if you lose, you're stuck with debt on a devalued asset. Meanwhile, the bank has made its money, come rain or shine.

It's a rigged game where the house (or in this case, the bank) always wins, and you, the consumer, are just a pawn in their profit-making scheme. It's a harsh truth to swallow, but that's the reality of diving into home loans without recognizing the strings attached.

While we are at it, let's also crack open the not-so-mysterious case of sky-high real estate prices in places like Dubai, **where you'd think the "no interest" rule would keep things more reasonable.**

But no, the banks there have still found a way to make a killing, and here's the scoop on how they do it, even without slapping the interest tag on it.

Banks in Dubai might not charge you the usual interest, but they've got a clever workaround. They use financing structures like Murabaha—where they buy a property and sell it to you at a higher price.

Think of it as their own version of interest but dressed up in a different suit. Or they might hook you up with Ijara, which is basically leasing until you own the place, but you'll pay plenty more than the original price by the end.

Then there's Musharaka, a joint ownership deal where you buy the bank's share over time, again at a premium.

What does this mean for property prices? They keep shooting up.

Every time a buyer like you comes along, backed by these "interest-free" loans, it inflates the price for everyone else. It's the same old song and dance—banks get their cut one way or another, ensuring that buying a house isn't just about finding a place to live. It's about navigating a financial minefield where the banks are the only sure winners.

So, even in the land of no interest, the banks have figured out how to keep the real estate game in their favor, **making sure that while you might think you're climbing the property ladder, you're actually just running on their hamster wheel.**

As we are discussing property inflation, also let's examine the nature of inflation. **There are two types of inflation. The one you feel and the one you don't feel.**

The one that is fuelled by higher salaries or payments overall is still tolerable because if the price is higher your earnings are higher too, provided wages go up overall for most people and are not isolated to a tiny segment of the society.

However, the inflation fuelled by debt makes lives miserable because while the salaries or the earning power has stayed more or less the same, the prices are still going up.

So, what could earlier be afforded with a year's income can now only be afforded by 5 years' worth of income! This has a flywheel effect and more and more people are having to take on debt either out of greed or necessity because there is no other option. **And as a result, they are bound to the financial institutions for the rest of their lives, never experiencing any degree of freedom at all.**

By the way, if you are reading this a hundred years from now, you may be laughing at the "cheap prices" I have mentioned, because assuming things have continued to go the way I described, without any policy interventions, I won't be terribly surprised if a one-bedroom house in an expensive city costed a billion dollars in 2124.

Of course, you have probably bought it using a home loan that will be paid off by 2324, in easy payments over the course of 200 years, by 7 generations of your family.

PS: By the way, to be fair, I don't mind collecting interest on my money. Does that make me a hypocrite? Well let me ask you. Do you like kissing your partner? Yes? Would you like someone else to kiss your partner? No? Then you are a hypocrite too.

PPS: By the way, if you are a bank, you can please still hire me for training for your people, even if you don't like me, just like I am still maintaining bank accounts, without particularly liking banks. I love money just as much as you do.

The Halo Effect

To be fair, this segment ought to have been up there with the Psychological Biases and Effects segment, **but because this is a long and personal story, I thought it would be best to keep it at the end.**

This is a story that I have really wanted to tell for many years, that perfectly illustrates how Maya creates “halos” and “distortions” around public figures images to the point that not only their followers but they themselves start believing in those “myths”

They say – Never meet your heroes. While it is not true for everyone, it is indeed true for a significant percentage of people we idolize. I know because I have met many during the creation of my movie/documentary Carve Your Destiny.

While working on this movie aimed at “inspiring” and educating the youth, over a course of many years I interviewed several prominent personalities across various fields, both in India and Internationally.

These people ranged from media figures, sports stars, scientists, famous public servants, businesspeople, musicians, journalists, politicians, social activists and the list goes on.

I admit that I myself was blinded by survivorship bias, that I talked about earlier so I assumed that because they were successful, everything they say must be correct, and they alone would know the path to “success.”

Over many years, the fates of many of these own figures went through a roller coaster, showing that often there are many factors beyond simplistic advice that decide where one ends up, and that too is transient. The one who maybe “successful” this year, may completely experience a fortune reversal in a few years.

But this is not what I want to talk about here. **I want to talk about the “Halo Effect” or this whole notion that the public has that just because someone is very successful, everything they say or do is automatically the right thing, WITHOUT question.**

On top of that, if someone is very successful and ALSO has a “humble” public image, the public starts treating them no less than a Jesus or Buddha, as if there is an aura of enlightenment or “halo” that emits out of

their bodies. If anyone dares to raise any opposition towards the same, they invite the wrath of the “devotees”

One such EXTREMELY POPULAR Indian figure, known for his significant contributions to national development and widely respected for his humility, initially agreed to participate.

This Individual could literally be considered a legendary figure in his field who indeed, at the time, was seen in the eyes of the public, as someone so great that NOTHING they said could be questioned.

I can't name the person outright, or their fanboys may create headaches for me. I've got enough headaches in life, don't need another one.

However, smart people can deduce the name of this person, through some “reverse engineering.” Consider this a treasure hunt of sorts 😊

Over their career, thanks to their “hard work” and also many lucky breaks, this Individual rose to the top of their field, although, today many question whether the person actually meaningfully contributed enough, or just happened to get all the attention, overshadowing many other deserving people.

Anyway, back in those days though, he was the “top guy.” When I first contacted them, I was asked to meet their secretary.

His staff, who, contrary to his reputed demeanor, displayed moments of rudeness and disrespect, almost straight away. I was used to this though, over the years of trying to independently interview “celebrities” staff so I ignored it and pressed on.

I explained and submitted my request. Within a few days, after following up with his office I was told he had agreed to meet me, but with the caveat, that I could ONLY meet him to explain the concept, but not conduct ANY interview. **No video cameras would be allowed and they would be taken away, if I brought them.**

Me being a young guy who had idolized this person for many years, even though I wanted to interview him, I thought at least I was getting a chance to meet him and upon explaining the concept, I would convince him.

To his credit, he indeed behaved in a humble manner and listened to what I had to say. In the end he said he liked the concept and LITERALLY PROMISED to be a part of the film.

I came back excited. Then I waited, and waited, and waited to hear from his office. There was no response. Weeks went by and finally his secretary responded by saying **he had decided NOT to do a video interview, but I could do a written interview.**

This made no sense. I was making a film, a visual medium, and he knew it. Everyone who appears in a documentary has to speak on camera, it made no sense as to how I could incorporate a written interview in a visual medium. Would I post his words on the screen, as other interviews spoke on camera?

I reminded his secretary that this was infeasible and he had promised to appear in the film on camera, during our meeting. I was not given a responded to for many days again and refused.

This gentleman spoke all over India and even the world, obviously giving interviews on camera. This gentleman travelled all over to "inspire" people with his speeches, so clearly, he wasn't camera shy.

Furthermore, a documentary, especially one that is structured in a powerful story like format once made has the potential to inspire people for decades or even more.

Instead of personally going all over and speaking everywhere one by one, just appearing once in a film like this would ensure his message to the young generation would be recorded permanently.

He perhaps doubted that this film would do his public image any good. But I still do not understand why. I was not writing for some tabloid, I did not belong to any media outlet, I did not belong to any political party, **I was just a student trying to create a film that ensure these role**

models' "wisdom" would be recorded permanently on camera for generations to come.

On top of that, everyone I had interviewed before him were also respected personalities, not controversial ones, so how exactly, appearing on camera was going to hurt his image, but a written interview in a visual film made sense??

It was then that I realized that unlike the persona that this gentleman portrayed where it looked like he wanted to inspire the future generations, **in reality he was simply obsessed with his public image.**

I have met and studied enough people to realize that while some people might not be obsessed with wealth, a lot of these "humble", "godlike" **celebrities are highly obsessed with their public image, to the point of PARANOIA.**

When I pressed on for a while, requesting another meeting to explain why appearing on the camera was necessary in this film, I was refused.

After a few months when I finally politely expressed my disappointment at this fiasco his secretary LITERALLY shouted at me and insulted me.

At that point, I decided it was not worthwhile pursuing this meeting anymore. But I did promise myself that I would tell this story at some point in the future, and thus it is here, in this book, after 15 years.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to have a positive image but the behavior he displayed could ultimately be classified as - Making false commitments, being extremely obsessed with their public image and displaying extreme paranoia around it. – all hardly signs of a "Godlike" person.

Even today, if I name him, his fanboys are going to jump on me, refuse to see anything wrong in what he did, so it's not worth naming him.

But what I want you remember is that there is often A BIG divide in how these "Gandhi-like" celebrities pretend to be and how they really are.

The media plays a crucial role in crafting the narratives around public figures. Often, media portrayal focuses on a few salient qualities that are easy to communicate and understand, such as charitable activities, public speeches, or other high-visibility actions. This selective portrayal can enhance the halo effect.

Many prominent figures have teams dedicated to managing their public image, which can involve highlighting certain aspects of their personality or accomplishments to create a particularly favorable image. Perhaps this is what his entire image was about.

The only thing I want to say is that he should have just said no when I met him the first time, or refused to meet at all, saving me tremendous amounts of time, energy and avoiding the ensuing frustration that went on for months.

He may have lost nothing, but I lost yet another role model in my life.

"Inside every cynical person, there is a disappointed idealist" – George Carlin

The Root Cause of ALL Pain in Our Lives, and How to Tame It

At the root, what is the source of most pain in our lives?

It is the same thing that is the source of pleasure in our lives.

You might say, it is desire, you might say attachment, you might say love.

Yes, on the surface these things may seem to be cause of most pain, but what is the REAL source of all these emotions? What is the root cause?

The root cause of all pain (but also pleasure) in our lives is THE MIND.

We might think we are very evolved, but we are still basically monkeys that can speak and plan. As a result of our monkey mind, we eventually

gravitate much more towards pain than we are able to enjoy pleasures in a healthy way.

There is no other option to be able to cope with a brutal world than to be able to tame this monkey mind, to at least some degree.

We have explored some ways to get our “thinking” oriented in the right way through philosophy and also explored the basic biological causes behind the same, and ways to tackle that (keeping our neurotransmitters balanced)

Now we explore, one of the most time-tested ways to tame our minds.

It is the practice of meditation.

Unfortunately, I think meditation is highly misunderstood. People believe (and I also did for the longest time) that meditation is about intense concentration, visualization, chants, or being highly aware of every single thing you do. While it may certainly work for some people, I see this as making the mind work even harder and activating the monkey mind even more.

The approach that I have discovered works for me is quite the opposite. But before I share what it is, let me explain my evolving understanding of this practice, right from the time I was a child.

Let's talk about most of my “failed experiences” with meditation

I have to come to realize that you cannot get the maximum benefits of meditation in your life, **if your mind is constantly striving for something in the future.** If you are still extremely ambitious and striving for extreme success, you most probably will not be effective at meditation.

Also, meditation itself won't fix your underlying problems. If you have a bad diet that's causing you problems, you need to first correct that. You have to fix certain aspects of your personality and your life to be at relative peace and then you can meditate. **Meditating while your inner world is in turmoil won't itself lead to peace.**

Let me share with you how I addressed these issues in my life. But first we need to go back to the beginning.

So, let's explore my first understanding of meditation. My grandfather, who was one of the wiser men I knew, got me hooked on to Indian mythological television shows, as a child.

Since a young age, in India, I used to watch mythological shows that used to come on TV.

Sometimes in those shows, a meditator (usually some figure from Indian mythology) would be sitting in caves, with their legs folded and eyes closed, or sometimes even standing on one leg, chanting a particular deity's name again and again in order to get that deity to appear and then they would get some sort of a boon from them

The deity would appear pleased because the meditator really flattered them and then ask the meditator what they wanted as a reward or a boon. Usually the meditators asked for immortality, which the deity would reluctantly give, but then add "subject to terms and conditions" in the fine print!

This was my first understanding of meditation; it was a means to please a deity and then get some sort of a reward from them!

However, meditation is not about concentration or fixation or looking for enlightenment or looking for progress, and certainly not about a reward from a deity!

In the truest sense of the word – Meditation is the art of doing nothing.

But of course, I did not know it.

I had a brief brush with Buddhism, spiritual literature and meditation at the age 18. It was the first time that I freely started exploring philosophy and the relatively rational philosophy of Buddhism appealed to me.

Of course, because I had no clue to how to actually practice meditation, and the advice I got was mostly bad, at that time meditation itself was of no help to me. As time went by, I also realized that I just don't have it in me to stay engrossed in spiritualism while still at that age.

Furthermore, I was constantly being brainwashed by society that one needs to achieve "success."

Around this time, having drifted away from the philosophy of the Buddha, I drifted towards the philosophy of um, of all people, Sir Napoleon Nil...

The next 17 years were spent chasing “success” as defined and exemplified by Sir Happy Nil, Thomas Eddy’s Son, Benny Boy Franklin etc.

But there I was, at 35, staring at the wreckage of the past 17 years. Those years had been a relentless chase for success, driven by every standard and expectation the world had thrown at me and realizing what I had been taught was MOSTLY nonsense.

To be fair, I did hit some milestones. Yet, despite all that, happiness seemed like a distant dream.

It felt like I was going through a weird mix of an existential crisis and an early-onset midlife crisis. My health was in shambles, and I couldn’t shake the nagging feeling that I’d done nothing meaningful in my life.

It was like I was staring at a clock ticking louder every day, feeling like death was sneaking up on me faster than I could keep up with.

In the midst of this chaos, **I stumbled upon the writings of Nassim Nicholas Taleb.** His ideas hit me like a ton of bricks. For the first time, I saw that the lack of “MASSIVE SUCCESS” wasn’t entirely my fault.

Taleb showed me that randomness and luck play a huge role in our lives, way more than we’re led to believe. It was like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I began to understand that sometimes, despite our best efforts, things just don’t work out the way we plan.

With this new perspective, I decided it was time for a serious overhaul. My physical health was in dire need of attention, so I kicked junk food to the curb. This wasn’t just about losing a few pounds; it was about treating my body with the respect it deserved.

But physical health was just one part of the puzzle. I needed to tackle my mental health too. The first step? Cutting down greatly on social media. The endless scrolling and superficial interactions were nothing but noise. Cutting back on it was like finally putting down a heavy, noisy backpack that I hadn’t realized was dragging me down.

Around this time, I came across OSHO's teachings, a figure who's been misunderstood and unfairly judged. His ideas, though controversial, really struck a chord with me. While I am no blind follower, along with Taleb's insights, OSHO's teachings opened a door to something I had long forgotten.

It felt like the REAL me that had been buried under years of societal expectations and personal struggles was finally coming back to life.

I threw myself into reading. I explored ancient Indian philosophy, Western wisdom, and everything in between. It was like I was on a quest for the lost pieces of myself.

I realized I needed to unlearn a lot of what I had been taught about productivity and success. Society's idea that you must always be doing something to be successful was starting to crumble.

My journey made me see the value in doing nothing sometimes—a concept that had been foreign to me. It wasn't about laziness; it was about recognizing the importance of rest and reflection.

Meditation, something I had previously viewed with skepticism, became a vital part of my life. But here's the thing—I learned that meditation shouldn't be the first step. You can't just dive into meditation without addressing your outer world problems first.

Start with your physical health. Clean up your diet, but make sure it's something you can stick with. Next, focus on your mental health. Social media? Cut back greatly on it or stick to what is necessary. Give yourself the space to do absolutely nothing without feeling guilty about it.

In this process, I also practically applied the 80/20 principle (20 percent of actions lead to 80 percent of the effects) This is about focusing on what really matters and cutting out everything else. It's a bit like cleaning out a cluttered room and only keeping the items that truly bring you joy or usefulness.

I also embraced the concept of Wu-Wei, the Taoist principle about effortless action. It's about finding ways to make things flow smoothly, rather than struggling and pushing against the current. It taught me that productivity doesn't mean constant hustle.

I let go of the false notion that productivity means always being busy. Modern role models often glorify endless activity, but I learned that true productivity can mean finding ease and enjoyment in what you do.

Understanding the non-linear nature of life was the final eye-opener. Life doesn't always follow a straight path. It's messy, unpredictable, and that's okay. I stopped trying to force structure and discipline into every aspect of my life. If it's not enjoyable, it's not sustainable.

Once I had done all that, now I had created the right environment to explore meditation seriously.

Why The Purpose of Meditation Should Not Be "Enlightenment."

In the new age of pseudo-spirituality, are we supposed to believe everyone who claims to be enlightened? If you do that, I think you are a fool.

I see people who exhibit behaviors far from what any enlightened being would exhibit and still call themselves enlightened

I don't think enlightenment is a one-time thing that happens and suddenly you know everything. It's an ongoing process in which you have to guard yourself against the innumerable distractions every day, and retain awareness in the midst of the noise.

So, in other words, gaining of wisdom, Spiritual progress or even a so called "enlightenment" CANNOT be a permanent state, it's like your weight on the weighing scale. You have to work every day to maintain it. Ignore it for too long and you slide right back.

So, I am not trying to attain "enlightenment". I couldn't care less. I am not trying or hoping for a better rebirth or after life, I am just trying to make my current life better. That's all we can do.

Even the wisest mouse in the universe is still the wisest only among mice (who have pretty small brains). No mouse on earth can understand quantum physics, so the question of an all knowing, ultimate state of enlightenment for a human being is also questionable to me because we are also limited by the constraints of our own brains.

So, no matter how arrogant we get, I don't think some things can be understood with the brains we currently have. "Enlightenment", at least in the way religions describe it, maybe a pipedream for most of us or may not exist at all.

"In the world you desire money, power, prestige, then you get fed up with it. Then you see the whole thing is just rubbish. Even if you get, you are defeated.

If you don't get you are defeated.

Then you come to feel that this whole thing is nonsense, now suddenly, you start playing new games – enlightenment, God, the other world, the other shore. Now you will be after these goals

This world at least is solid, that shore, that world, the other world is absolutely fantasy. Now you are in a deeper ditch than before.

With the first you could realize that it is useless, with the second, now it will take millions of lives to realize that this too is useless."

- OSHO

So why should we pursue meditation, if enlightenment is not the point of it? Nor is a future afterlife? The answer – You need it to simply stay sane in this crazy world.

But for it to be sustainable for lay people, it has to be done in a completely different way to how people usually teach it. Different things work for different people, so this is not a recipe for all. This is just based on my experiences and what I have discovered over the years.

Key Principles:

1. No Desire for Enlightenment or Progress: There should be no desire of enlightenment or progress whatsoever. There should be no need for excessive concentration on your breath or anywhere else as excessive concentration isn't going to necessarily relax you. Meditation is actually not supposed to be concentration but the opposite of concentration.

When you meditate, you should drop every idea associated with conventional goal setting, which is wanting to get somewhere. You should want nothing, do nothing, be nothing, concentrate on nothing, measure nothing, and just sit quietly in a posture that makes sure you don't go to sleep.

By removing the pressure to achieve specific states, this directly addresses one of the main sources of stress in modern society—the constant drive for productivity and perfection. Meditation has to be seen as a source of relief, not another task.

2. Reject any “Competition” in Meditation Practice: There's absolutely no need to compare your meditation duration with others or to turn it into a competitive sport. Meditation, by its very nature, is best practiced alone and free from competition. It should be approached as you would any natural, essential activity — done not for competition, but because it's something your mind and body need.

3. Flexible Duration and Timing: While it may be challenging at first, it will get easier as time goes by. There is absolutely no need to sit and say, "I am going to meditate for an hour or 30 mins." Forget it. Just sit quietly. If after 5 minutes you start feeling sleepy or excessively bored, that's okay, get up. You cannot sustain what you don't enjoy. Do it at a later stage when you feel like it again. Just like you eat when you are hungry and sleep when you are sleepy, you don't force yourself to do it when you don't have the need.

You don't even need to meditate every day for an hour to get the bulk of the benefits. or you can do it multiple times a day, if you want to when needed. what is more important you keep doing it at some level.

4.No Fixed Schedule: Also, there is no need to commit to a specific time of the day to meditate; by doing so, you have labeled it a chore. Do you ever commit to a specific time to watch a show or browse social media, using a timetable? You do it when you want to. If you want to enjoy it, do it when you want a few times a week and not commit to a timetable and schedule.

Don't see it as a job to be done. See it as an activity to relax, just like you would watch something for entertainment. No one rigorously schedules their entertainment, do they? Except Benny Boy Franklin, maybe.

5.Focus on Sustainable Practices, Not Duration:

It's not about how many hours you can spend in meditation; what truly matters is the sustainability of your practice over time. About 80% of your mental health benefits are likely to come from just 20% of your efforts — provided you can actually sustain them! But paradoxically, to get benefits you have to stop measuring or wanting any benefits at all. You have stop wanting to get somewhere or see this as a means to the end. Every moment is fine the way it is.

Finally, there are times in your life that you really need to be a little "angry" or "driven." If you think meditation is making you too calm or disconnected, it's okay to cut back on it for some time to get back to an optimum state.

Just like there can be overtraining in the gym or an overdosage of medicines, depending on your life objectives there can be something called over-meditation too!

This too is something I have discovered from my own experiences.

If you are an expert meditator or have found something that works for you, you don't have to follow any of the above. I am not saying this is a one size fits all approach. This is just a more enjoyable and sustainable approach for lay people who have a hard time sustaining meditation the way it is conventionally taught, based on my experiences.

In a nutshell, in mediation, or at least the version that seems to work for me, you have to:

Want nothing

Do nothing

Desire nothing

Visualize nothing

Be Nothing

Observe Nothing

There is absolutely nothing you wish to get out of meditation.

And eventually it will seem like you are merging into nothingness.

Just sit in the right posture so that you don't drift off to sleep, in the name of "merging" into nothing!

You may also meditate on your conception of "God" if that is what works for you. If the idea of God makes that "nothing" more comfortable, that's absolutely fine. But make sure you do it gently and not with excessive concentration.

No matter what though, do not forget that meditation is about relaxation not concentration. And like everything else, MODERATION, not Obsession is what will lead to the greatest benefits from meditation.

"Arjun, those who eat too much or eat too little, who sleep too much or sleep too little, will not succeed in meditation. But those who are temperate in eating, sleeping, work and recreation, will come to the end of sorrow through meditation." – Krishna to Arjun in Bhagavad Gita

How "Maya" clouds genuine contributions in the eyes of society.

This is the story of one unbelievable woman, who from old Hollywood movies grabbed my attention almost immediately, because honestly, she was so beautiful. But the more I researched on her and found how beautiful her mind was, the more my appreciation and respect for her grew even further.

This book would be incomplete without her story, so here it is –

In the glamorous world of Hollywood, where dreams are made and fantasies come to life, there have been countless iconic figures who have graced the silver screen. **One such remarkable woman was Hedy Lamarr**, a name that not only symbolizes beauty and talent but also innovation and brilliance.

Behind the enchanting smile and captivating eyes was a mind that would revolutionize the world of technology and communication. **Hedy Lamarr, was not just an extraordinary actress but also, the inventor of the technology that would ultimately power WiFi.**

Born into a middle-class Jewish family in Vienna, Austria, Lamarr faced challenges from a young age. Her father, Emil Kiesler, was a successful bank director, while her mother, Gertrud Kiesler, came from a prominent Budapest family.

However, Lamarr's life took a tragic turn when she was just 12 years old. Her father passed away, leaving her mother to navigate the financial and emotional struggles that followed. Despite the hardships, Lamarr remained determined to forge her own path.

At just 18 years old, she starred in the controversial Czech film "Ecstasy," which catapulted her into the spotlight.

After appearing in the film, she married Friedrich Mandl, an Austrian businessman involved in arms dealing. Despite being a Jew, Mandl sold arms to Germans. Lamarr found herself trapped in Mandl's lavish world,

attending dinners with German military figures. **It was during these encounters that she listened carefully to discussions about weapon design.**

Hedy was only 19 when she became Mandl's trophy wife. He wanted to prove his success by marrying the most beautiful woman in Vienna. Initially, she may have been impressed, but soon realized she was imprisoned in her own home.

Lamarr disguised herself as a maid and managed to escape from her constrained life and made her way to America, **where she debuted in Hollywood with the film Algiers in 1938.**

Her striking beauty and charisma quickly garnered attention, and she began her career in acting at a young age. Lamarr's unique blend of exotic beauty, intelligence, and a magnetic screen presence set her apart from other actresses.

Her stardom was such that the attention she got at one time in Hollywood could even be compared to what Angelina Jolie gets in today's era. While she was often cast in roles that capitalized on her physical appearance, she yearned for more substantial and challenging roles that would showcase her talent.

Her desire to break free from the constraints of being typecast as a beautiful face led her to take risks and pursue unconventional opportunities. This drive to prove herself is what truly set her apart. She wasn't content with relying solely on her looks; she wanted to challenge herself intellectually and leave a lasting impact on the world.

After long days shooting movies, Lamarr dedicated her evenings and spare time to her scientific pursuits. She would spend hours studying technical literature and experimenting with different ideas.

It was her intellectual curiosity that drove her to collaborate with George Antheil and develop the frequency hopping spread spectrum, which would revolutionize wireless communication.

Their collaboration was inspired by the challenges faced by the Allied forces in maintaining secure communication during the World War 2. Enemy torpedoes were sinking American submarines. Lamarr, being

naturally inclined towards problem-solving, recognized the need for a more robust and secure communication system. **She believed that by using a method called frequency hopping, which involved rapidly changing radio frequencies**, communication could be made more resistant to interception and jamming by enemy forces.

Lamarr shared her idea with Antheil, known for his innovative approach to music and composing. Together, they devised a system that synchronized the rapid frequency changes between a radio transmitter and receiver, making it nearly impossible for enemies to decipher the signal. **They obtained a patent for their invention in 1942, which they hoped would aid the war effort.**

At that time, the technology was far ahead of its time, and its true potential was not immediately recognized.

The military's initial response to Hedy Lamarr's inventions was unfortunately plagued by skepticism and a dismissive attitude. **Hedy's extraordinary beauty and status as a Hollywood actress often led people to underestimate her intelligence and scientific capabilities.** The prevailing stereotype at the time suggested that someone like her couldn't possibly possess the intellect and technical knowledge required for groundbreaking innovation.

Her glamorous image and Hollywood background led them to believe that her involvement was merely a publicity stunt or a superficial endeavor.

Despite facing resistance and being largely dismissed, Lamarr persisted in her efforts to convince the military of the value and significance of her invention. She organized meetings and presentations, seeking to demonstrate the potential military applications of frequency hopping. **However, her endeavors were often met with indifference or were simply not taken seriously.**

It wasn't until several decades later, in the 1960s, that Lamarr's invention was finally recognized for its true potential. As technology advanced, the military and scientific community rediscovered the significance of frequency hopping and its applications in secure

communication. Lamarr's invention became the foundation for modern wireless technologies, revolutionizing the way we communicate today.

Hedy Lamarr, HOWEVER, did not make a SINGLE PENNY from her groundbreaking inventions. One of the reasons for this was the unfortunate timing of the patent expiration.

As mentioned earlier, it was not until the 1960s, that Lamarr's invention found practical use. By then, the patent had already expired, and Lamarr did not receive any royalties or financial compensation for her groundbreaking contribution.

This unfortunate circumstance prevented her from reaping the financial rewards that would have been rightfully hers. Despite the lack of financial gain, her invention left an indelible impact on the field of wireless communication and became the foundation for numerous modern technologies such as WiFi, GPS etc.

In her later years, Hedy Lamarr faced financial difficulties and struggled to maintain her lifestyle. Several factors contributed to her financial struggles.

One significant factor was obviously her inability to profit from her inventions

Furthermore, Lamarr's career as an actress began to decline, and she faced challenges finding substantial roles that matched her talent and previous success. **This decline in acting opportunities affected her income and financial stability.**

Lamarr's personal life also played a role in her financial difficulties. She went through multiple marriages, some of which resulted in costly divorces and legal battles.

Unfortunately, towards the end of her life, Lamarr faced more significant financial struggles. She reportedly suffered from health issues and incurred medical expenses. In addition, her reclusive lifestyle and isolation from the Hollywood scene made it challenging to secure substantial income.

However, just before she passed away in 2000, she finally began receiving the recognition she deserved for her intellect.

In 1997, her son, Anthony Loder, accepted a Pioneer Award from the American Electronic Frontier Foundation on her behalf. In 2014, she was posthumously inducted into the United States National Inventors Hall of Fame.

This is another example of the Non-Linear nature of life. A “cause” does not necessarily produce an immediate “effect.” Sometimes the effect happens so late that we forget the original cause in the first place.

So outcomes don’t always happen when you want them to happen or the way you want them to happen. Sometimes, they never happen, sometimes they happen when you least expect it, and sometimes they happen when you are no longer around.

As we celebrate the remarkable achievements of Hedy Lamarr, let us remember her not only as a Hollywood actress but also as the visionary inventor who paved the way for the wireless communication we enjoy today. Her brilliance and determination will continue to inspire generations to come!

Finally, most of all. REMEMBER THIS-

For truly exceptional people ahead of their time, their death is not the end of their story. Their death marks the beginning.

A dose of brutal truth though: You don’t decide whether your contributions are valuable. Their ultimate worth to the society, a million random events or possibly even “fate” (you never really know) decides that.

Making your present horrible in the hopes of romantic ideas of posthumous widespread fame is also quite futile and ultimately a waste of time. The only thing, you should do is to make sure the activity

itself is your reward, because that is the only thing under your control, everything else is a dream or a wish or a hope.

Making sure the activity/activities you devote yourself to serve their own reward, without ANY hopes for external rewards like wealth, fame, whether living or posthumous is the only way you can live a life that was worth it.

Otherwise, "sacrificing" your today for a glorious future is another societal trick, that will seduce you into wasting your life doing things you never wanted to do.

Stop running after external validation, make your happiness dependent under your control, if you want a life where you pursue a purpose without realizing in the end that **in the process of trying to become something in life, you forgot life itself.**

Furthermore, worrying too much about your "legacy" or what others will think of you after you are gone is like worrying about your food and shelter after you are dead. **You can't even hear people saying anything good or bad about you, because you are already dead.**

Suppose somebody praises you behind your back or if multiple people talk about you positively but that good word or praise never ever reaches your ears. Why good is such praise or even criticism? It doesn't affect you since it never reaches your sphere of consciousness. Posthumous fame is the same. You never get to hear about it ever, till the end of time itself.

If you have done something worth talking about for humanity, people will talk about it. If not, they won't. **But why do you care? You are already dead.**

Second, how does that fame actually benefit you in any way? Does it make you a celebrity in your next life?

Finally, let's assume for a second that after your death, you have become an omniscient super consciousness, who can, like a computer, track how often you are remembered by others, my question is how long can you be remembered?

100 years? 500 years? 1000 years? 5000 years? 20000 years? Then what?

People have better things to do than worrying about some long dead person.

Even Jesus or Buddha will ABSOLUTELY be forgotten in due course of time, no matter how long that time is.

This is not a speculation but a fact, every single one of human figures will be forgotten because humans themselves will go extinct one day or the other. Which heroic dinosaur celebrity do you remember?

The only thing that's worth it is either doing something makes life worth it today or will be of benefit to the coming generation **regardless of whether you externally benefit from it.**

Start deriving intrinsic pleasure from what you create instead of hoping for external payoffs. Even if what you create is extremely valuable, apart from the intrinsic pleasure you may be able to derive from working on it, there is anyway no other guaranteed reward.

The "external" rewards of that work will be derived by others, not necessarily you. **The creator of the wheel didn't receive any significant rewards out of inventing the wheel, the real rewards went to the future generations**

Thus, the luckiest people in the world, by far, are not those with most fame, money or societal respect. They are those who can control their own happiness instead of depending on it from the external world.

"The lust for fame is the last that a wise man shakes off." – Tacitus

NEVER FORGET THIS IF YOU WISH TO LIVE IN PEACE

In the Bhagavad Gita, one of the most revered ancient scriptures of India, (**and another incredible segment from the previously mentioned ancient epic Mahabharat**), Krishna who represents the supreme divine is having a conversation with the Prince, Arjun, while on the battlefield.

Arjun is hesitant to fight his own relatives who belong to the opposing army and is in a dilemma about continuing further. Krishna reminds Arjun that as a warrior, fighting on the battlefield is his duty, regardless of who is in the opposition.

Krishna explained that there are only two things that could happen, Arjun could either fight and defeat the opposing army or he could get killed himself. Either way, he would only be partaking in the duties and destiny that is already assigned to him. **Whether he would be victorious or defeated, was irrelevant, because in both the cases, he would be doing what he was born for.**

However, if he were to lay down his weapons and refuse to fight or flee the battlefield, he would be running away from his duties as a warrior.

Krishna reminded Arjun that the **divine will has only given everyone a role to carry out in this world**, but it has not given them control over the results of their actions.

Still, as long as one sincerely carries out whatever his/her job is, does so without any attachment to an external reward and does it to the best they can, **that person is admirable, regardless of whether they win or lose.**

The only thing the “player” is judged on is whether they played the “game of life” sincerely and with the right intentions. As long as one did that, their life was worth it.

They are a “Karma Yogi” or the person who has lived life with sincere devotion to executing whatever actions (Karma) that life has meant for them. **The term, “Karma Yogi” can literally be translated to mean – A person who has devoted their life to action, without obsession for the reward.**

A Karma Yogi is not hoping for a better life or even a better afterlife as a reward for what they do. A Karma Yogi is not overly obsessed with winning as much as they are dedicated to doing their job well. And if they do win, they remember that the win happened not only because of their actions but because of infinite forces beyond their control and they never forget to be grateful for the same.

"The steadily devoted soul attains unadulterated peace because he offers the result of all activities to Me; whereas a person who is not in union with the Divine, who is greedy for the fruits of his labor, becomes entangled." – **Krishna to Arjun in the Bhagavad Gita**

Accept that little is under your actual control and finally come to terms with it.

I was sitting in my balcony some time ago, just enjoying the view. **I saw a pigeon sitting very quietly next to the balcony.**

Because these days I have become a wannabe-philosopher, I started wondering, what is the point of existence of that particular pigeon sitting next to my balcony? The more I observed the more I realized that the pigeon appeared so quiet and contemplative, **that perhaps it could be a pigeon philosopher itself.**

With its eyes first staring deeply at the traffic, and then turning to look at me looking at it, perhaps the bird could have the same question about me, "**Why does this weird chimpanzee staring at me, exist?**"

If you go by the world's current understanding of evolutionary biology, neither I nor the pigeon are that special (Sorry Pigeon philosopher bro).

Both of us only serve as a means to the end.

According to evolutionary biologists of our time, the body is a mere vessel for perpetuating the real "living thing" which wishes to spread itself- **The Gene.**

According to this understanding, which like most scientific understandings maybe updated in the future, **our bodies are mere vessels or vehicles for the gene.** They only exist to serve one purpose, **to spread the gene** and help it survive over millions of years, maybe more.

Just like if you have to go somewhere long, you may have to first take a cab, then a flight, then a train, and then maybe a cab again, the gene uses our bodies as vehicles to spread itself over millions of years, with the body being only a means to the end, but otherwise serving no value.

Once the gene leaves the vessel to hitch a ride on another vessel, it does not really care what happens to the previous self. **It is "selfish."**

While this does not literally imply that a gene is consciously selfish, at a fundamental level, for the gene, **the perpetuation of the species is important, the individual is not.**

This is similar to how systems and social orders like organizations, kingdoms and countries are interested in their collective survival, even if it requires an individual's sacrifice.

So, am I just a vessel? Are you just a vessel? Is the Pigeon Philosopher just a vessel? Or is there a real meaning to any of us having existed at all?

I often asked myself, even as a child, as to why I was really here? What was the purpose of me having existed at all? What was the reason behind me suddenly popping into existence out of nowhere, and was there a point of it?

Do I have a purpose of existing as an individual, or did I just pop out to serve my real master – The Gene?

In the 19th century, there lived a German Philosopher called Arthur Schopenhauer who minced no words and stated that an individual's existence was similar to that of a prisoner.

Arthur Schopenhauer didn't waste time on pleasantries when it came to his philosophy. He looked at life and saw a brutal reality that many of us are too scared or too indoctrinated to acknowledge. Let's cut to the chase: Schopenhauer argued that life is basically a prison. No sugar-coating, no silver linings—just a cold, hard slap of truth.

First off, he believed that we're all trapped. None of us asked to be born. Here we are, though, thrown into existence without a choice, like convicts thrown into a cell. And once you're here, there's no easy way out. You're stuck serving a life sentence until death comes knocking. It's a bleak picture, isn't it? But that's exactly how Schopenhauer saw it.

He compared our daily grind to being stuck behind bars, limited by the boundaries of our own suffering and the fleeting nature of time itself. You can't escape it; you can only endure it. We're constantly hemmed in by the past and the uncertain future, trapped in a present that often feels too constrictive, too painful.

Schopenhauer's take is that life is a zero-sum game. Everyone and everything is in a constant battle for survival, clawing their way over each other just to catch a fleeting moment of relief from the inevitable pain and decay. That's not living; it's just surviving. And according to him, this

survival is driven by what he famously called the "will to live"—a primal, insatiable drive that keeps us clawing through existence, blind to the futility of it all.

Schopenhauer suggests that if we could just see life for the prison, it is, we might find a way to navigate it with less disappointment.

Instead of constantly seeking pleasure and running from pain, we should recognize that pain is the more common state in life. Pleasure is temporary, fleeting, and often not as satisfying as we expect.

In sum, Schopenhauer's message is pretty hardcore: Life is like a prison where happiness is a brief visitor. We're all inmates here—some of us are just in deeper denial than others.

At first, I thought this guy was being really negative and was a glass completely empty kind of dude. At one point of life, I would have called Schop a "whiner." **However now having seen life sufficiently, I can't help but join him as a fellow whiner (Henceforth, I appoint him as my "buddy" Schop)**

Over optimism has been a far bigger cause of misery for people rather than pessimism, because almost everyone has sufficient evidence of widespread suffering, but only a few have evidence of sustained, long-term pleasure in their lives.

Even the richest people leading the most pleasurable and hedonistic lifestyles, soon suffer as a result in terms of their physical and mental health. In the face of this fundamentally unignorable observation, being told that life is ALWAYS a beautiful and positive thing, is an insult to people's intelligence and is like a slap in the face.

Perhaps coming to term with the realities of life will help people be more at peace.

You see, pain far outweighs any pleasure of life.

Don't believe me? Just don't eat or drink for two days and you will feel pain.

Stay outside in the heat in 50 degrees (Celsius) plus temperatures all day long with no respite and you will feel pain.

Stay outside in -20-degree temperatures all day long with no proper clothes on and you will feel pain.

Fall off even the first floor of a building and you will feel pain.

Have a bad fever and you will feel pain even in doing things you otherwise find great pleasure doing.

You can't sustain intense pleasures for more than a few minutes (unless you are on narcotics that anyway lead to pain later), but you can suffer from extremely intense pain for days.

I will stop now otherwise you will call me overly morbid for obvious reasons but it's clear the list goes on and on.

In fact, in the absence of pain killing medicines, it is only in fulfilment of certain criteria such as sufficient food, sufficient water, proper clothing, proper shade, reasonably functioning bodily functions etc, that a biological body feels no pain.

Otherwise, even if a single one of these things goes out of balance, you will feel pain.

So how is life something inherently "positive". It's only positive if you're an ignorant but lucky person in terms of health, relationship and finances etc. who fails to acknowledge his luck, so that then you can relax in your cushy chair and AC room and call others negative.

Don't misunderstand the point of my observation. My point is to not make you depressed, **but rather to help you open your eyes and rethink the judgement you pass on others at every stage** (thanks to super positive thinkers brainwashing you to believe everyone deserves what they get and that man completely controls his own destiny)

Well last I checked, those super positive thinkers can't even control when and where they are born, what kind of parents they had, what kind of talents they are born with, or their own levels of stupidity, so what makes them think they can completely control their own destiny?? **Oh... their stupidity, that they can't control... right....**

A side effect of over-optimism is that such people usually believe the world is completely meritorious and firmly believe everyone ends up where they deserve to be. They can never see their own good luck or others' bad luck.

On the other hand, only those who are willing to open their eyes to the harsh realities and widespread sufferings of life are the ones who can feel compassion for someone else's suffering.

Now, I want you to Get ready for a ride, because I am about to depress you even more than Schop.

Schopenhauer intrigued us with a now famous philosophical musing, "**Man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills,**"

I agree with the second part of the statement, but frankly, he's missing the full picture with the first part as well.

Except for a very finite areas in life where we have considerable control, anything that is dependent on factors other than your own will (your genetics or the decisions of others or the macroeconomic environment of your country or what family you were born in, or whether you get an exponential return on your effort) is extremely hard to pull off and many times is a matter of pure luck.

First off, consider physical limitations. Say your will is all fired up to run a marathon, but your legs are paralyzed. Where's your vaunted free will then? It's tethered by the hard realities of your body.

Consider you gaining the information you have from this book.

You would not be able to read it if you didn't have eyes (or have hearing loss if you are listening to an audiobook)

You would not be able to read it had you not received basic education on language and communication as a child.

You would not be able to read it had I not written it.

You would not be able to read it, had you not heard about the book from somewhere.

Did you "WILL" any of these things? They were out of your control.

Now let's move further what if a brain injury has left you unable to move, speak, or think clearly? Suddenly, the grand idea of willing anything crumbles to dust.

Where's your ability to do what you will then? It's utterly compromised, reduced to wishful thinking, because your brain—the command center for all willing and doing—is out of commission. And this isn't just about extreme cases. One may argue that these super positive thinkers got a brain injury as well.

It highlights a fundamental flaw in the notion that our will operates independently of our physical and mental state. It's a reminder that the so-called "free will" is profoundly dependent on our neurological health. You can't even enjoy the illusion of making a "conscious choice" if your brain isn't functioning properly.

Moreover, consider the everyday influences of other people's decisions, societal norms, and random life events. You can will to become a leader, an innovator, or a partner to someone, but these aren't solely in your hands. **Others have their wills, their plans, and most of the times, they just don't align with yours.**

If we're truly honest with ourselves, Schopenhauer's statement should read: **"Man can neither will what he wills, nor do what he wills without the permission of his own body and the world around him."**

See, I one upped even Schop! Now, now where's my Nobel?

Anyway, there are many motivational bros (**I used to be one myself but I dissociate myself from the movement!**) who greatly corrupted minds with their nonsense. They inspired thousands of similar disciples as well as pseudoscientific movies on the Laws of Attraction that give you the illusion you can control anything in the universe.

Sorry to burst your bubble, but that's not quite true.

We humans are really funny creatures who like to think of ourselves are incredibly special and important. We talk about wanting to make a "dent in the universe" and by that we mean we want to achieve something big in

our careers that makes a significant difference in the fabrics of spacetime. Of course, we conveniently forget that to really make a dent in the universe, one would have to, at the very least, destroy a few million galaxies.

Let me narrate a story from the Upanishads. The Upanishads are ancient Vedic scriptures that delve into the nature of reality.

There once was a time when the mighty demi-gods, had triumphed in a great battle. They stood victorious, basking in the glory of their conquest. The air was thick with their pride as they reveled in their strength, their powers, and the victory they believed was solely theirs. "This victory is ours!" they proclaimed, "This triumph is our doing!"

But unknown to them, their victory had not been their own. It was Brahman, the Ultimate Cosmic Power, the source of all energy and life in the universe, who had silently guided their hands, who had subtly orchestrated their success. Yet, the demi-gods were blind to this truth. They had allowed their pride to cloud their vision, to fill their hearts with the illusion of self-sufficiency.

Sensing their arrogance, Brahman decided to reveal a profound truth to them—a lesson that would shatter their illusions and show them the true nature of their power.

Brahman appeared before them, not in a grand display of light and thunder, but as a mysterious, inexplicable presence—a wonder that the demi-gods could not comprehend. This was something they had never encountered before, something beyond their understanding. Perplexed, they turned to Agni, the god of fire, who was also known as Jātavedas, the one who consumes everything.

"Agni," they said, "go forth and discover what this wonder is."

With confidence, Agni approached the mysterious presence. As he drew near, a voice emerged from the presence, a voice that seemed to resonate with the very fabric of the universe.

"Who are you?" the voice asked.

"I am Agni," he replied, his voice full of pride. "I am Jātavedas."

"And what power do you possess?" the voice inquired.

"I have the power to burn anything and everything that exists on this earth," Agni declared, his flames crackling with fierce energy.

The voice was silent for a moment, and then it laid a simple blade of grass before Agni. "Burn this," it commanded.

Agni, the mighty god of fire, summoned all his strength. He unleashed his flames, a roaring inferno that could reduce mountains to ash. But to his shock and disbelief, the blade of grass remained unscathed. No matter how fiercely he burned, the grass stood untouched, as if mocking his efforts. Defeated, Agni returned to the other demi-gods, his pride shattered. "I could not burn it," he confessed. "I could not discover what this wonder is."

Undeterred, the demi-gods turned to Vāyu, the god of wind, also known as Mātariśvan, the life-breath of the universe. "Vāyu," they said, "go forth and discover what this wonder is."

With the confidence of one who could sweep away entire worlds, Vāyu approached the mysterious presence. As he drew near, the same voice asked him, "Who are you?"

"I am Vāyu," he answered, "I am Mātariśvan."

"And what power do you possess?" the voice inquired.

"I can carry away anything and everything that exists on this earth," Vāyu declared, the winds swirling around him in a powerful vortex.

Once again, the voice laid down the blade of grass before him. "Carry this away," it commanded.

Vāyu, the mighty god of wind, summoned all his force. He unleashed gales that could topple forests and churn the oceans. But to his astonishment, the blade of grass did not budge. No matter how fiercely he blew, the grass remained rooted, unmoved by his power. Humiliated, Vāyu returned to the other demi-gods, his pride in tatters. "I could not carry it away," he admitted. "I could not discover what this wonder is."

Finally one of the “gods” was able to recognize Brahman for what it truly was and all the gods realized their follies. **They were left in stunned silence, their confidence shattered.** These beings, who had once thought themselves invincible, now realized that their powers were not their own. They understood that without Brahman, the source of all energy, they were nothing.

The important thing to understand from this story is there are cosmic forces controlling our lives that our human minds cannot always comprehend or transcend, even though we repeatedly have the illusion of the same.

The greatest freedom is to finally come to terms with how little freedom we have.

This is not “Fatalistic”, on the contrary, this is about realizing that you neither deserve complete blame nor unnecessary praise for how your life eventually turns out

There is something profoundly liberating about knowing man is not completely liberated from the forces of nature.

“Your “slaves” are actually fellow slaves, if you keep in mind that fortune has its way with you just as much as with them.” – Roman Philosopher Seneca to his friend Lucilius on the topic of “slaves.”

“One who knows that adversity and success come and go in obedience to destiny becomes content. He neither desires nor grieves.

One who knows that birth and death, happiness and misery, come and go in obedience to destiny sees nothing to accomplish, and in action remains unattached.

One who has realized that only by caring is misery caused in the world becomes free, happy, serene, desireless.”

- ASHTAVAKRA GITA

How to Use the 4 Paths of Yoga to make your lives a LITTLE LESS PAINFUL.

Traditionally, in Indian philosophy, it is said **we can follow ANY OF the 4 paths of Yoga** to become more spiritually evolved. I will name them and then we will go deeper into each one of them.

Jnana Yoga (The Path of Knowledge)

Karma Yoga (The Path of Action)

Bhakti Yoga (The Path of Devotion)

Later a fourth path was added as the way to spiritual realization titled Raja Yoga (The Path of Meditation)

The fourth path was also made more well known by a man named Swami Vivekananda.

He was one of the greatest philosophical and spiritual minds produced in the recent era, but it's tragic that his quotes have been often been twisted by the system to suit their own needs. To know this spiritual giant, ignore his most popular quotes and read his actual books and work, particularly on the subject of Advaita Vedanta.

Anyway, let's get back to the main subject

First let's begin with briefly defining what the 4 paths are

1. **Jnana Yoga (The Path of Knowledge):** Jnana Yoga involves the pursuit of knowledge with the aim of understanding the true nature of reality. It includes but is not limited to just academic learning, but also thinking deeply through philosophy.
2. **Karma Yoga (The Path of Action):** Karma Yoga is the path of selfless action, performed without attachment to the outcomes or fruits of the action. The path of Karma Yoga has been explained above in the dialogue between Krishna and Arjun.
3. **Raja Yoga (The Path of Meditation):** Raja Yoga, also known as the "royal path," includes the practice of meditation, but it encompasses

more than that. But to explain in laypeople's terms, Raja Yoga is a path of solitude, contemplation and meditation.

4. **Bhakti Yoga (The Path of Devotion):** Bhakti Yoga is the path of devotion, love, and surrender to the Divine. It involves practices that cultivate love, devotion, and surrender to "God or the divine aspect, however one chooses to define it.

Back when these paths were originally proposed, it was stated that no single path is superior to the others; rather, each provides a unique route to the same ultimate goal: union with the divine, realization of the Self, or liberation.

However, in the ever-changing world that is far weirder than how it used to be and will get even weirder still, it is no longer enough to stick to one of the 4 forms.

You need to practice all 4 forms, not with the goal of becoming an expert in either one of them but rather becoming a lifelong practitioner of all 4, in moderation.

The approach I am suggesting involves a combination of ALL four, but in moderation. The objective is not "enlightenment", the objective is to do what it takes to survive this brutal world. Let me explain what I feel you should be doing.

Jnana yoga or reading or learning from mentors or philosophy is needed to get the right mindset and direction to survive in this brutal world and make sure you are not made a fool of.

The best path of jnana yoga that I can recommend is reading as much as you can, especially the classics, avoiding most books on modern worldwide bestseller lists, digging deeper and reading as many modern and classic books you can read without judging them by their covers or how few copies they sold.

On the contrary, with some exceptions, if it is written in the past few years AND is INCREDIBLY popular AND is available in every physical

bookstore in the planet, it is probably not good for you. Here is why -

Often, things are popular because they are engineered to be popular, with loads of money going into the engineering, not because they are any good for the consumer.

Of course, I'll shamelessly count myself amongst the exceptions among the modern writers and recommend my own books, "How to Cope with The Brutal World" and also, "Unlearn: A Practical Guide to Business & Life", as both of these books share some harsh realities that most popular books are too afraid share. But you may skip my earliest work, movie, Carve Your Destiny if you wish, you won't be missing much, except if you want to marvel at my good looks when I was in my twenties.

By the way, the biggest irony? The copyright for the classics has already expired. They are already in public domain. **Why in the world are you ignoring them? Perhaps, because modern society would PREFER if you ignore them? After all, if you read them, it would be much harder to brainwash you. I will leave that for you to ponder over.**

Also, make sure you read across as many fields as you can, especially the fields that are of even mild interest you, because that is the only way you can connect the dots. Vivekananda said that to a philosopher who is a cat, their entire philosophy would be from the perspective of cats and they would forget that there is a universe beyond what they know. **So, integrate multiple world views and don't be a cat, no matter how much the "specialize or die" nonsense is shoved down your throat.**

If you are seeking mentors for jnana yoga, then begin by identifying the right mentor for the stage of life you are in. Some mentors are so far evolved from you that what they say will make no sense to you and in that sense, they are useless (for you). Them teaching you would be like explaining calculus to someone in kindergarten, a waste of time for both of you!

So, identify the right mentor for the stage of life you are in today. Provided that mentor is a good mentor, learn from that mentor till the point you have learned all you can from them, then you need to move on to other

mentors that give you new perspective, **if your current mentor is themselves not evolving and growing any further.**

If you stick to the same mentor who keeps himself/herself at the same level, without constantly evolving, how would you evolve in your life?

The message? Keep upgrading your mentors, unless your mentors keep upgrading themselves.

Most importantly no matter how much you respect a mentor, never become a blind follower. It's okay to be extremely receptive in the beginning but provided you have been a good student, there will come a time, when your guru himself/herself cannot help you grow any further (provided they are an actual guru, not a fake one!).

At that point if you are a blind follower, you will just keep running around in circles for the rest of your life, especially if the guru themselves has become stagnant. The moment you become blind, you have put a full stop to acquiring more jnana or wisdom.

Karma yoga is needed because without action, your energies add up and lead to frustration. Continuous dissipation of that energy is needed WITHOUT attachment to any external results. This is not an end goal but an ever-continuing process that keeps the body and the mind fit as long as you live (and this is why I suggest moderate work throughout your life, if possible, instead of burning out in the first thirty and doing nothing else for the next 30.)

Don't let your teachers or parents or employers or politicians or propaganda decide what's karma yoga for you. You have to decide it.

Karma yoga, in a modern context, SHOULD NOT be interpreted to being agreed to being exploited by the system or manipulative people, in the name of duty.

It means you do something, that YOU CHOOSE to do, with no expectations of an external reward

But you still need intrinsic pleasure from doing something to sustain anything in the long run. You cannot sustain what you don't enjoy. **And that only happens when you yourself decide what activity is worth it. Working for 16 hours a day at a job that you hate isn't karma yoga, it's called making a fool out of yourself.**

Remember that. **Karma yoga is only sustainable in the long term** in accordance with the **Taoist principles of Wu-Wei or effortless action**. If you are constantly fighting, pushing way too hard, utilizing every ounce of your willpower for your efforts, soon you will be disillusioned and bitter, and wonder why the hell are you working so hard, when you are not getting anything in return.

On the other hand, if you do it only on your terms, in accordance with effortless action, only doing it to the point you enjoy it and not till it becomes a pain, you can make the activity your own reward and make karma yoga practically sustainable in the long run.

Another caveat with Karma yoga- even if you enjoy it, don't overdo it so much that it starts backfiring on your health. Rest is important even if you are extremely passionate about something.

A popular quote of Vivekananda which goes like "**Rise, Awake and Stop not until the goal is achieved**" is often twisted by the system to "motivate" young people to waste their life away in the name of Karma Yoga. But the system won't share his other quote.

"Learn from my experiences. Don't be so hard on your body and ruin your health. I have harmed mine. I have tortured it severely, and what has been the result? My body has become ruined during the best years of my life! And I am still paying for it." – Swami Vivekananda

So, please don't be fooled into ruining your mental and physical well-being for the system!

Next, we come to Raja yoga, the path of meditation. It is needed because somethings cannot be understood intellectually, you need to experience them. You cannot learn how to swim through books, you need to get into the water. This form of connecting with your inner self can only happen when you give the space and solitude for it to contemplate. **It cannot happen only through reading or through work.**

In fact, too much reading or work or immersion into a single activity, without counter-balancing it with times of "doing nothing" maybe detrimental to your overall health. Meditation at very its core, is the art of doing nothing.

If the term "meditation" is too hard for you, then at the very least, start sitting alone by yourself from time to time. If you want to remain sane in this insane world, you have to give some alone time to yourself. There is no other way.

Most animals in the wild spend their entire lives interacting with other animals without EVER knowing what they themselves look like.

Unfortunately, we aren't too different. All our life, we play characters - the child, the student, the employee, the friend, the partner, the parent, the professional etc. We have assumed these to be our real identity because we have only been taught to interact with the world around us, but never with ourselves.

Start giving time to sit alone by yourself, free of ALL distractions, or your entire life will go by without knowing the actual actor behind these characters.

Finally, Bhakti Yoga is gratitude for whatever the divine/nature has given you and keep reminding yourself how grateful you are for whatever good things you have.

It is also about surrendering, because there are some forces beyond your control.

Bhakti Yoga has nothing to do with religion. You could be a Hindu, A Christian, A Muslim, A Sikh or practice any other religion. As long as you

have belief in something higher than yourself, Bhakti Yoga is anyway a part of you. It's just another word for prayer and gratitude.

But what if you are a skeptic who doesn't believe in any higher power?

Well, you do believe in nature, and the laws of nature right? Just surrender and show gratitude to the laws of nature if you want peace in your life. That is the only way to peace in a brutal world, EVEN if you have multiple overlords.

By the way, being an atheist or agnostic is completely compatible with Bhakti yoga, because you don't need to believe in a personal deity to acknowledge, respect and be grateful to the power of nature.

I find no conflict with practicing Bhakti Yoga, even for the highly rational/scientific/skeptic, if nature itself is seen as the DIVINE.

Those who cannot practise Bhakti yoga and even show gratitude to nature from time to time, will make the classical mistake of thinking that they are bigger than nature.

They will never be grateful anything good in their life, they will feel that they themselves are supreme and continue to make one mistake after another, till the point it is finally time for them to pay for what they did, as a natural consequence of cause and effect.

How Controlling Parents Keep Children trapped in MAYA.

Now, we come to perhaps the most “controversial” segment in the book. For a while, I was debating with myself, whether to include it as I am not sure how it would be received, especially in Asian cultures. Then I realized, whether it is received well or poorly is irrelevant. It is a message I believe in and a message that needs to be heard.

Sure, some people will not like this segment, but the purpose of the book is to not to share what society likes, but what society needs to hear, especially the future generations.

A Caveat:

First - This is NOT for all parents, but only excessively controlling parents in general across all races and generations, whether today or in the future.

Second – Most of us love/loved our parents, but it doesn’t mean, that every action taken by parents is necessarily good for you, in fact I would argue that a lot of it does far more harm than good to kids, making an already difficult life far more difficult.

So, keeping that in mind, let’s start.

If you are not Indian, let me introduce you to a movie called **Baghban**.

"Baghban," for those who haven't had the, um, pleasure, is a Bollywood film where the parents are saints, and the kids, once they grow up, practically become devils.

The parents give their all, sacrificing their dreams, savings, and the best years of their lives, only for their ungrateful offspring to toss them aside once they're old and grey. It ends with tears, drama, and a heavy-handed moral lesson that would make even a soap opera blush.

As of 2024, it has been 21 years since that movie is being used to shame children and perpetuate a narrative that is far from accurate, in the real world.

It's time for a global audience to get a fresh narrative, the one that tells the other side of the story.

Let us begin!

Let's get one thing straight, despite what your family portrait might suggest, parents aren't Gods or avatar of Gods either.

It's high time we shredded the myth that just because someone decided to bring a child into the world, they're somehow automatically bestowed with a halo.

First of all, you could be a god if you give them a heavenly life. How are you a god if you have brought kids into a far from heavenly world?

In fact, I would say, adoptive parents often step up to the plate in a big way, as long as they are GENUINE and SINCERE. They choose to take in children who are completely unrelated to them and provide them with a home and love. If we're handing out titles for godliness, those kinds are the first in line.

Biological Parents aren't saints because they did their job. They chose to have kids. It's like signing up for a marathon and expecting a medal just for showing up. Kids owe respect, sure, but not their soul and freedom. This whole "live for your kids, then make them live for you" business needs a serious overhaul.

They say parents are God, because they gave you the "Gift of life!"

Well, life isn't exactly a gift. Let me ask you - If life were actually a gift, why is this "gift" taken away from you, mostly without your consent? Because it was never really a gift in the first place. Gifts are not given to be taken back, certainly not without consent.

Secondly, a life where pain heavily outweighs pleasure for many, both in terms of frequency and intensity, cannot be termed a gift in the conventional sense.

If you still have any doubts, go re-read the previous sections.

You will say - Why are we afraid to die if life isn't a gift? Well, almost all living beings are afraid to die, because of hardwired biological programming at a genetic level, NOT BECAUSE life itself is a gift. **There is no fear of Annihilation before Creation.**

The fear of death is a natural side-effect of being born. Kids didn't fill out an application form requesting to be born.

They didn't tick a box saying, "Yes, please, I'd love to join your household, endure your parenting experiments, and live up to an impossible set of expectations."

Parents make a decision—to create life. And let's be real, often it's about their need, their want rather than some divine calling.

Elevating parents to godlike status just for participating in the creation of life is like thanking a chef for just reading the recipe. What truly matters, what should be honored, is how they cook the meal, how they nurture and raise their children beyond the biological act.

By the way this whole business of worshipping parents—and their parents, and their parents' parents, and so on is a little overcooked, don't you think? If we're really going to get into the worship business, why stop at humans?

Let's take it all the way back to our truest ORIGINAL ancestors – bacteria and other microorganisms.

Think about it. These microscopic marvels are the real pioneers, the original settlers of Planet You. Without them, none of us would be here trying to figure out if we owe our great-great-granddad a candle or not.

And how do we repay these tiny titans? **With antibacterial soap, that's how! Talk about ingratitude!**

Sounds Absurd? It's the truth.

Now let's explore the push for relentless and mindless improvement.

Ah, the timeless tradition of never being quite good enough for the family jury. It's like being stuck in a twisted reality show where the judges are your parents, and the grand prize is a fleeting nod of approval. You can do

everything for their approval, but guess what? The goalposts just keep moving. Welcome to the never-ending game of "Just One More Thing."

Here's the kicker: they call it motivation, improvement, pushing you to be your best. But let's cut through that and call it what it often is—chronic dissatisfaction.

It's like trying to fill a bucket with a hole in the bottom. No matter how much water you pour, it's never going to be full, and you're just left wondering why you keep carrying the water in the first place.

What if this relentless quest for improvement actually backfires? Here's a truth bomb for you—sometimes, it does. Instead of churning out well-rounded geniuses, this relentless push can churn out stressed, anxious individuals who are so caught up in chasing an impossible standard that they forget how to be okay with just being themselves.

Why do many parents do this?

To fulfil their own dreams, they couldn't accomplish. Perhaps they have taken the whole idea of "never giving up on one's dreams" one generation further!

Congratulations! Pushing your kids to fulfil your dreams does have a romantic tone to it. **But your kids are not here to fix the past, fulfil lost dreams, or prop up sagging egos.**

They're here to write their own stories, not be footnotes in someone else's.

Humor me for a moment—imagine if we weren't always under renovation like a never-ending home improvement project. Maybe some of us are more like a slightly quirky bookshop that's a bit disorganized but full of character. Not everything needs to be a shiny and streamlined.

And here's an aggressive nugget: Constantly telling someone they need to be better can sometimes make them worse. It can lead to burnout, resentment, or worse yet, a complete breakdown from the pressure.

So, next time the family council starts with their well-meaning but utterly exhausting critiques, maybe throw this back at them: "**What if I'm already the best version of myself right now?"**

It's not about having a chip on your shoulder; it's about having peace in your heart. After all, isn't contentment supposed to be part of the human condition too, or did we just skip that chapter?

Maybe it's time we all took a good look at what 'improvement' really means and realize that sometimes, **the best upgrade is appreciating what's already there.**

The role of the correct parental knowledge in a child's "success"

Now, a lot of what your kids will become will depend on the conditioning you have given them in your childhood. So if you have given them the wrong conditioning, don't be shocked, if they don't become what you hoped them to be.

If you think kids are just born a blank slate and magically turn into adults without any baggage, think again. They're like sponges, soaking up every bit of wisdom or nonsense you throw at them.

Children are observant; they're like mini surveillance drones, absorbing every detail of how you do things. They don't learn from what you say; they learn from what you do.

Let's not forget the classic, "I'm older, so I'm right." This gem is based on the unshakeable logic that age equals wisdom.

But you will be shocked the number 80 plus year olds walking around with the maturity level of overgrown schoolkids.

So if you're wondering why they didn't turn out the way you dreamed, maybe it's time to look in the mirror.

Maybe the programming was a little off. Maybe those rose-tinted tales of your 'glorious past' weren't as educational as you thought.

Parents, in an effort to enforce filial piety (the idea that elders should be worshipped), often like to remind their kids that whatever status the kids have in the world is because of their parents.

I agree and by the same logic, whatever status the kids do not have in the world is also because of their parents.

Let's get into the nitty-gritty. Ever wonder why Indian communities like Marwaris and Gujaratis as well as some international communities like the Jewish community, often end up as money wizards?

Here's a clue: it's not necessarily in the genes; it's in the upbringing. **From the cradle, these kids are raised in a culture steeped in business acumen and financial management. Many life skills are like accents and languages. The earlier you begin the more adept you get at them!**

Over 20 years especially when you start something at 5, it becomes a force multiplier, with the knowledge you get and the genuine connections you build from an early age, with the number of mistakes you can make and learn from an early age, and often access to sizeable capital you start with (unlike "networking" on LinkedIn).

You can clearly see why the rich get richer and there is nothing wrong with it as long as it is done ethically.

On the flipside, you've been feeding your kids with a steady diet of the Indian idiom, "**Poot sapoot to kya dhan sanchay, poot kapoot to kya dhan sanchay,**" which translates to "If your child is worthy, why save wealth? If your child is unworthy, why save wealth?"

As a consequence, most of us spend the first 20 years of our lives learning absolutely nothing about money or practical life from our schools, parents or the environment.

Since we are at it, let's reexamine this classic Indian idiom, "If your child is worthy, why save wealth? If your child is unworthy, why save wealth?"

This essentially suggests that if your child is worthy, they don't need your wealth because they'll amass their own, and if they're not, whatever you leave to them will just go to waste.

It's a view that totally skips over the critical importance of imparting financial wisdom.

First off, let's bust this myth wide open: Nobody is born a perfectly worthy child or completely unworthy child. One may also argue that the definition itself is subjective, but let's not get into that.

We're all a mix, learning and fumbling through life's financial lessons. Pretending that saving money for kids or giving them financial education is unnecessary because a worthy child will figure it all out on their own is like saying you shouldn't bother with swimming lessons because a good swimmer will naturally figure out how not to drown.

In reality, **we're all somewhere in the middle of this worthy-unworthy spectrum**, and in this uncertain world, giving your kids some financial cushion plus a lot of financial wisdom can only help.

A kind of a launch pad of sorts. Because that works as a multiplier on one's efforts. It's a life jacket, a safety net—heck, it's the financial literacy equivalent of wearing a belt and suspenders. Why take the risk when you can prepare?

Now that I'm at it, let me be even more controversial and tear down another myth - **this whole notion of inheritance as a colossal favor to your kids.**

The whole "when we go, we will give you our money" spiel often comes off like some grand, benevolent gesture—as if parents are doing their children an enormous favor by leaving them whatever's left after a lifetime of accumulation.

Here's a newsflash: acting like it's a huge sacrifice to pass down what you can't physically take up with you is not only misleading, it's absurd.

There are no luggage allowances on the journey to the afterlife, so let's stop pretending there's any other easy option, other than giving it away to those you are biologically programmed to love (Children)

They didn't ask to be born into this dog-eat-dog world, so the least you can do as a parent is prepare them not just to survive, but to thrive. **This means not only money but also financial wisdom.** Because in the end, the best financial plan you can pass down isn't necessarily hidden in a will—it's lived out in the everyday choices you make right in front of their eyes.

Giving idealistic but wrong advice to kids

Watching most parents give idealistic but largely worthless advice to their kids, is like watching some mega celebrity's public display of fake humility—it's polished, it's practiced, but let's be real, it often feels more like a performance than genuine modesty.

Everyone claps, everyone pretends to show admiration, but deep down, we all know it's all a bunch of nonsense.

What is some of this idealistic advice?

Distorting their own past

Parents, ah, the original revisionist historians of our personal histories! They often craft their pasts like they're curating a museum exhibit on moral superiority. You know the spiel: **back in their day, they were paragons of virtue, never stepped out of line, and always did their homework before sunset without being told.**

Let's get real—the stories from "back in the day" are often so polished, you'd think their teenage years were spent in a saintly montage of good deeds and perfect decisions.

Parents have this uncanny ability to remember their pasts not as they were, but as they wish they had been. It's all rosy retrospection, where every choice made was the right one, and every opportunity was seized with noble grace.

But let's pull back the curtain on that fantasy, shall we? The truth likely includes its fair share of mistakes, misadventures, and mayhem—none of which make the final cut in the family folklore they love to recount. It's like they're trying to sell us a coming-of-age story that's more fiction than fact, setting standards based on a script they themselves never followed.

And what's the impact? They end up setting these towering, unattainable ideals based on a half-baked past, pushing us to chase a version of perfection that never even existed. It's like being in a race where the finish line keeps moving; you're set up to fail before you even start.

So next time your folks start mythologizing their flawless youth, take it with a pinch of salt. Remember, they weren't always the sage gurus they present themselves to be now—they were once as clueless and chaotic as the rest of us (and probably still are!)

Don't let their selective memory dictate your reality or set your standards. Life's messy, mistakes are inevitable, and that's perfectly okay. After all, if they really were that perfect, wouldn't the world be perfect by now?

"Saying I suffered back then, so you should too"

Well, first of all, every new generation already suffers in their own way, because every new era may solve some problems but has its own set of new challenges.

Secondly,

When you recount all the things you did as a young person in order to comply with your parents and try to justify it by saying your child should now do the same, it's like saying because you were made a fool of, so the child is now obliged to honor the tradition and make a fool out of themselves too by sacrificing their life away.

Oh, the classic generational hand-me-down of questionable traditions—where "I did it, so you have to do it too" serves as the family motto. It's as if life's a tag-team match or a relay race, and once you've been it, you can't wait to pass it on to the next unsuspecting sucker—your child.

Let's break this down. When parents spin tales of their youthful compliance and sacrifice, often glossing over their regrets and what-ifs, and then use those tales as a blueprint for their kids, it's not just tradition—it's tragicomic. **It's like saying, "I walked twenty miles to school uphill both ways, so why shouldn't you suffer just as much?"**

As if enduring some outdated rite of passage is a necessary ingredient in the recipe of character building. News flash: Just because you were manipulated by your own parents, doesn't mean it's some sacred family tradition that needs to be preserved like grandma's pickle recipe.

What we've got here is a classic case of misery loves company. Instead of using their experience to spare the next generation the same follies, they're all about enrolling them in the same school of hard knocks—membership mandatory. It's aggressive nostalgia, weaponized: "Back in my day, we didn't have choices!" **Great, but we do now, so why not aim for something better?**

I didn't have the internet when I was in kindergarten, but neither did anyone else from my time. So what? What the kids do not have today, their kids will. It's called "technological progress!" Please come to terms with it!

So, let's drop the act. **Breaking the cycle isn't disrespect; it's evolution.** Your kids aren't here to cosplay your youth. They're here to live their best lives, with the benefit of your hindsight to guide them, not bind them.

Let's turn those "When I was your age" stories into "I want you to have the opportunities I didn't" discussions. Remember, good parenting isn't about replication; it's about elevation. Stop the generational replay of mistakes and start championing the new paths they could take.

Because really, the best tradition you can pass on is the one where each generation is given the right wisdom but is ultimately free to write their own script when they grow up.

Telling Your Kids to "Struggle More" and that "Hard work conquers all."

Stop over glorifying hard work to your children and setting them up for failure by teaching them that if they fail it's ONLY because they didn't try hard enough. They failed, maybe because that thing they were doing is not their talent?!

Maybe parents are forcing a fish to climb a tree and are completely deluded and completely ignoring the role of luck in their own lives, because that makes their stories sound less inspirational (even if there is nothing particularly inspirational about it)

In case I am misunderstood, I am NOT saying hard work has no role to play, I am just saying the facts are more complicated than purely working hard. There are some spheres of human activities where one has more control and then there are spheres where control is very limited.

No matter how hard someone works, success is not guaranteed when it comes to spheres where the outcome is out of your hands, or when you work on things that are not your natural talents.

Stop saying that just because some famous guy struggled for years in a bus, and then eventually became a billionaire, so struggling in a bus is prerequisite to becoming a billionaire. **Here is a newsflash, most people who travel in a bus, travel all their lives in a bus, not become billionaires. Seriously, who are you kidding?**

Also, the world is ALREADY a struggle for everyone in one way or the other. How much more do you want kids to seek struggle in a world that is already tough?

Kids should be taught, how to make things easier, not to make them even harder. Teaching the young to glorify struggle for the sake of struggling is like asking them to ride a bicycle while keeping the brakes forever clenched to the wheel and believing they are some superheroes for doing the same. In reality, people doing this only look like fools.

The "struggle masala" is already in the dish of life by default, bro. Don't add so much more to it that people throw away the dish itself.

So, instead of feeding kids a steady diet of "struggle more" or "just work harder" stories, let's give them something more substantial: real wisdom.

Teach them to understand their strengths and how to leverage them.

Show them how to adapt to changing circumstances and seize opportunities

Educate them about the economic landscape and help them build GENUINE networks that can also support their dreams.

Equip them with resilience, adaptability, and a clear-eyed understanding of how the world really works

And yes, teach them that sometimes, despite all the hard work and best intentions, failure is still a possible outcome—and that's okay. **It's not a reflection of their worth or effort; it's a part of life.**

In essence, let's stop selling the dream that hard work alone paves the road to success, and start preparing kids for the reality, no amount of hard work by itself will make you "mega successful"—but having the right tools and mindset might just help you build a happy, fulfilling life, which is a worthy success story in its own right.

INDOCTRINATION and Promise of a "BEAUTIFUL" Future

From the moment you pop into the world, you're strapped into a rollercoaster of societal norms. It starts with your parents, the original tour guides, who hand you your first map drawn in crayon, showing you the 'right' paths: walk, talk, smile, don't question.

Then you hit school, where the crayon becomes a ballpoint pen—more permanent, less room for error. Memorize this, regurgitate that.

Flash forward, you're in college, still chasing that carrot because, hey, you were promised a feast at the end of this marathon. You trade your best years for caffeine-fueled all-nighters, clinging to the hope of 'enjoy later.' Because that's the deal, right? Work hard now, live it up later.

You slog and try to pass one nonsensical exam after another, giving up your youth, then slogging in College and then finally getting a degree because you were told by parents, that if you work hard now, you can enjoy later.

But hold up, plot twist: you graduate, land a job, and just when you think it's finally 'later'—nope! Turns out, the 'real' hard work starts now. And the best part? **You're expected to be grateful for this endless grind, to bow down and worship at the altar of parental expectations for the privilege of running in circles.**

You're told, "Just follow the plan—our plan—and everything will be golden." But as the years roll by, the gold starts looking a lot more like

glitter, and suddenly, it's less about you soaring on the wings of your dreams, and more about you anchoring yourself to familial obligations.

THEN, suddenly you are told, "We brought you into this world and raised you, now you are SUPPOSED to take care of us." It's as if your life's purpose was scripted from your first breath: support your creators.

And we're supposed to thank them? To treat parents as Gods for bringing us into this circus called the "real life?" **For telling us we are on a path that promises gold but delivers crap?** Let's just call it what it is—a beautifully packaged lie.

After "gifting" you this brutal world called real life, complete with wrong advice from the very childhood and making sure that you are under their control as long as possible, in the end, it turns out that that financial debt is not the only debt you have, you owe a MUCH BIGGER debt to your parents, although you never asked for the loan!

Well, guess what, have you ever thought about love instead of constantly reminding your kids of debts and obligations?

Have you ever thought that if you are actually empathetic towards your child, they may anyway return it, not out of obligation, but out of sheer love for you.

But have you ever genuinely allowed conditions for that love to be created? No. Many parents still want to control their children even when they are adults.

Many parents continue to berate them and make it hard to coexist, and when the inevitable happens, **they go around sharing sob stories of how children abandoned them or how parents are Gods (usually shared with other parents who did the same to their kids.)**

Many parents wield the "obligation card" like a club, and then they wonder why their adult children aren't rushing to spend time with them. If every interaction is a reminder of debt and duty, how can genuine affection and gratitude flourish? It's like trying to grow a garden in salted earth.

For god's sake, please operate from a mindset of Love, not of making the kid return obligations.

The real question is, did they ever stop to consider what *you* need? What your hopes, dreams, and challenges might be? It seems they're more focused on ensuring you pay your dues than on fostering a genuine relationship that could naturally inspire love and support.

It's always about what you owe them, not about what might actually build a healthy, loving bond.

It's time for a radical idea: What if parents operated from a mindset of only love, not ledger-keeping? What if they focused on understanding and empathy, recognizing that love returned out of genuine affection is infinitely more rewarding than love demanded as a tax?

Sadly, too many parents get lost in their roles as authority figures and forget how to be partners in their children's journeys. They circulate melodramatic messages talking about ungrateful children, **without pausing to reflect on their role in this fractured narrative.**

So, here's a thought for all the parents out there still clutching their ledgers: put away the balance sheets. **Start building relationships not on debts and duties, but on mutual respect, understanding, and unconditional love. Maybe then, love won't be an obligation—it will be a natural, heartfelt choice.**

Here's a final blast, **your time together on earth with your children isn't endless. One day it will be time for you to leave this world, and if you are particularly unlucky, they may leave BEFORE you.**

Your time with your children is precious, and every minute you spend tightening the reins is a minute lost where you could have been building a relationship based on mutual respect and love. Why waste it trying to turn your kids into grateful, nodding automatons, repaying debts they never signed up for, in a life that's already handing them enough challenges?

Mutual love and mutual respect between a child and a parent, with no expectations or obligations is the answer. There is no other answer.

And this concludes what I had to say to about this.

REFLECT FOR A FEW MINUTES ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED SO FAR, BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE FINAL SEGMENT OF THE BOOK.

How to Cope with The Ultimate Truth of Life

What is the ultimate truth of life?

You already know it, even if you don't want to say it.

The ultimate truth of life is we are all going to die and not too long in the future.

We like to live in denial, as if thinking that the denying death is somehow going to make life easy. On the contrary, denying death makes us spend our LIVES on meaningless circus like pursuits, that ultimately contribute nothing to our happiness.

It is the realization and meditation on death that gives our life meaning.

But it has to be done in the right way. **In this final segment, I will share how I try to cope with the Ultimate Truth of Life – Its END.**

Now, it is not common to witness the complete cycle of life, from being a baby to dying as an old person, of the same being in front of your eyes. Mostly, you either see the birth of one individual and the death of another.

Here is where many of our pets are different, because you get to see the complete cycle of existence, in their lives.

Let me share a little bit about my pet dog, Tобу

For a long while we imagined we would have a pet in our house. I remember we used to go to our grandmother's place in Allahabad and they used to keep cows.

Me and my brother/cousins had some really funny stories from back then. Once, our moms made a strawberry milkshake for us. Something came upon me and I convinced a cousin of mine to feed the entire strawberry milkshake to the cow. The cow lapped it up and was really enjoying it, but then our moms saw and we got the smacking of our lives!

So keen was the desire to get a pet, that I and my brother tried to convince my grandmother, to send the cow from her city, Allahabad to where we lived in New Delhi, in a multi-floored apartment building!

When my grandmother asked, how they were supposed to keep a cow in a multi floored apartment building, we answered we could keep the cow in the balcony!

When asked how, we would ensure that the balcony wouldn't get dirty, we said, the cow could just poop from the balcony!

Good times!

Anyway, we grew up.

In 2005, we finally decided that wish to get a dog and unanimously decided it would be a Labrador.

The man at the pet centre, brought two white labrador puppies. Instinctively, my father reached out and took one of the puppies in his arms. And then he decided he wouldn't let him go.

His reasoning was – “now that he is in my arms, it means he is the one meant for us.” We named him Tobi, after “Tobi”, a popular tricycle brand that we rode as kids. Why did we pick that name though? I really have no clue.

By the time he was 3 months old he recognized his name and understood that he should go to the bathroom if he wished to relieve himself.

He used to look out the window whenever we had to go outside and couldn't take him with us and he couldn't understand why. The thing is restaurants don't typically accept dogs as guests but you should have tried explaining that to him!

He was a genuinely funny dog, as he entered adulthood, he tried humping any guest that tried to come into the house. That caused us quite a few embarrassing moments.

He attended all family functions, including religious ones, and my father ensured that if anyone treated him differently, to remind them that the

same “power” that created them, created Tobu as well, so how could he be denied the right to be a part of even religious functions.

He was a genuinely kind dog also, the kind of consciousness that you know has a “pure soul” in them. Unlike some dogs who immediately attack other animals, he was extremely gentle with almost everyone including the tiniest of kittens.

Perhaps he was too kind for everyone’s own good. Once, when I was not in town, an intruder apparently broke into our house. Thankfully he wasn’t armed, but it seemed he was more of a drug addict looking for something to steal.

When the intruder turned up, instead of attacking him or even barking at him aggressively, I am told, Tobu was wagging his tail, trying to be friends with him.

Luckily, a family member spotted and caught the intruder or Mr. Tobu would have gladly showed the intruder all the right items to steal.

He was with us throughout the time I was making the film titled “Carve Your Destiny.” In fact, I have included a single shot of him in the movie too! Throughout the time he was with us, he was a part of most of the events, whether good or bad that our family went through.

Every morning, we were awoken by his loud barks demanding to be taken out for a walk. I remember being irritated as during that time I was often working throughout the night and trying to get some sleep in the morning. **But then I realized, even back then, that one day I would miss these same barks.**

As time went by, he started slowing down. By the time it was 2017 it was already old, slowing down and suffering arthritis.

The first time he fell seriously sick was in early 2017, he happened to eat food that seemed to be contaminated and then threw up multiple times throughout the night. In the morning, his trademark barks were absent and he could barely get up and walk. Throughout the day he refused to eat anything.

Another day went by and he barely got up and barely ate or drank anything. Frantically, we searched for good doctors and eventually found a good doctor who got him hydrated through drips and finally in the evening, he got up and finally started drinking water and walking around a bit.

The next morning, after 3 days, he finally barked very feebly demanding food and that's when we knew he was on the road to recovery.

But he was still almost 12 years old and in a dog's life, that's not a short time. The next few months, he was in relatively okay health despite being slow.

Then one day in the winter, he was just sitting and suddenly made a weird noise and collapsed. Scared we tried to get him back up. He had not lost consciousness, but that was the first time I was literally terrified about what was happening to him.

We realized something was wrong. We took him to the doctor again, when this time, he remained sick on and off. He kept getting skinner and skinnier. **One day I saw him walking all thin and bony, walking in a zig zag fashion. I knew it wasn't a good sign, and perhaps for the first time wondered, if this is what becomes of every living being eventually, is it all even worth it?**

We took him to the doctor again and he performed a thorough physical inspection and then suddenly found a tumor like object attached to his belly, asked us to get an ultrasound done.

What we found in the ultrasound was the final shock, what he had was most probably lymphoma, a type of cancer. This time, the doctor said that it was not recommended to surgically operate him as due to his age, if that was attempted, he would probably die on the table.

The next few months he went through a lot of pain. You might say why we didn't "put him down." Let me ask you in turn, if you have a family member who is suffering from terminal cancer, "would you put him down?" to relieve him of his/her suffering? The dilemma was the same for us as to us he was much more than a "pet." Somewhere or the other, we had a bleak but obviously fruitless hope that he would pull through.

The next few months were full of anxiety and sadness for almost all of us and pain for him. Slowly, he lost his ability to even get up and became partially paralyzed.

I remember, when this happened, he looked at me with a face, as if he couldn't understand why all of a sudden, he couldn't get up and walk. **Perhaps for the first time in his life, he felt powerless and didn't know why this was happening.**

Every time, I went out during this time for my meetings, I was always worried whether he was okay. When I came back, I and the family did everything they could to take care of him and even tried to make him "walk."

But things just didn't seem to get better. Slowly he lost his ability to control his bladder. In early February he suddenly had another big seizure, and it was only after a minute or two that the seizure got over.

My father called the doctor and the doctor told him, it was time to "let him go"

The next two days he stopped eating and drinking almost completely. On the second day he repeatedly passed stools mixed with dark blood, and in the evening, he finally passed away. Our baby had gone.

He came as a baby in front of me and he died as an old being, making me clearly see the cycle of life and death in a brief period of 12 years.

Whatever be the scientific purpose or evolutionary purpose of my dog, Tobu coming into existence, I believe the purpose of him coming into my life was to teach me about the circle of birth and death and remind me of the ultimate truth, in case I strayed too far from it.

And here is the ultimate truth for my life.

I have not existed for 13.8 Billion years, for that is when time began with the Big Bang (at least as per our current knowledge on the nature of existence). After a brief stay on earth for some years, I will be gone forever. The "Anubhav Srivastava" writing this today will no longer exist, till the end of time, if there is an end of time.

The same is absolutely true for you as well. EVERY single person existing on earth today, will be replaced by a new set of humans in a matter of some decades.

So, the question is, what are we doing here and what are we all fighting and struggling for?

No matter how fast you try to run the rat race there is a cliff waiting for each one of us at the finish line from which we are going to fall off. **None of us are going to win anything special by speeding up except getting to an early finish line.**

Once, in the ancient world where empires rose and fell under the shadow of mighty rulers, there lived a man who cared nothing for wealth, power, or fame. **This man was Diogenes, a man who had forsaken all worldly possessions, literally choosing to live on the streets.**

His only companions were his thoughts, his wisdom, and a loyal dog who sat by his side. Diogenes owned little—just a lamp to warm him at night and relied on the Sun during the day.

One day, as Diogenes lay sunbathing by the side of a dusty road, his peace was interrupted by the arrival of a grand entourage. Banners fluttered in the wind, and soldiers clad in shining armor marched in formation, announcing the arrival of none other than Alexander the Great, the young king who had set out to conquer the world.

Alexander had heard tales of Diogenes, the man who lived as if the world belonged to him, though he possessed nothing. Curious to meet such a man, Alexander approached Diogenes, expecting to impress him with his grandeur. But instead, he received a look of indifference.

"Who are you?" asked Diogenes.

"Do you not know who I am?" Alexander asked, his voice filled with authority.

Diogenes laughed and said to his dog "Look at this foolish man, he does not even know who he is!"

Alexander, not accustomed to such indifference, tried to engage the philosopher. "I am Alexander the Great. I have conquered lands far and wide. Surely, you have heard of me."

Diogenes finally looked up, his gaze piercing yet calm. He turned to his dog and said, "Listen to this foolish man. He calls himself 'the Great'—a sure sign of his deep inferiority. Only those who feel small inside feel the need to make themselves appear grand."

Taken aback by the sharpness of Diogenes' words, Alexander pressed on, hiding his discomfort behind a smile. "I have come to meet you, Diogenes, because I have heard many stories of your wisdom. I am about to conquer the world, and I wished to see you before I do."

Diogenes smirked, a mix of amusement and pity in his eyes. "Well! You've seen me now. Now, don't waste anymore of your time. But tell me, Alexander, have you ever considered what you will do after you've conquered the world?"

Alexander hesitated, the question catching him off guard. "I haven't really thought about it. I suppose I will rest. I will finally relax."

The philosopher chuckled, turning once more to his dog. "Did you hear that? This man is mad! He thinks he must conquer the world to find rest, while I lie here in the sun, resting without conquering anything."

Alexander felt a pang of shame. Diogenes' words rang with truth, a truth so simple yet so profound that it unsettled the conqueror. "I feel foolish before you, Diogenes. Tell me, is there anything I can do for you? I control vast lands and command great armies. Name it, and it shall be yours."

Diogenes looked at Alexander with a steady gaze, the kind that seemed to see through the layers of power and wealth that encased the young king. "Really? Then do just one thing for me: move a little to the side. You're blocking the sun."

Alexander, who could have given Diogenes the world, was left speechless by the simplicity of the request. He stepped aside, and Diogenes closed his eyes, returning to his sunbath as if nothing had happened.

As Alexander turned to leave, Diogenes called out to him, "Alexander! Just remember two things, as a gift from Diogenes"

"First, no one has ever truly conquered the world. There's always something left unbeaten, because the world has too many dimensions, too many layers. In a life as short as ours, it's impossible to conquer it all. That's why every person who has set out to conquer the world has died feeling absolutely frustrated in the end."

"And second, you will never return home. Ambition is a cruel master—it always whispers, 'Just a little more,' and before you know it, your entire life has slipped through your fingers."

"Remember these two pieces of advice. These words are my gifts to you, gifts to a conqueror, from a nobody."

Alexander left, haunted by Diogenes' words. Throughout his conquests, as he marched through foreign lands and fought countless battles, he could never shake the image of the philosopher lying peacefully in the sun, needing nothing, wanting nothing.

Diogenes' words echoed in Alexander's mind until the day he died. He never returned home, as Diogenes had predicted.

The conqueror, who had set out to rule the world, never found the peace that Diogenes had known all along.

Imagine, you see a dream when sleeping, where you worked very hard, became rich, famous, and basically became mega successful. Then all of a sudden, you woke up and you realize all of this hard work in the dream was worth nothing. Shocked? Disappointed? Now imagine you do the same in your real life, work extremely hard for several years and somehow do manage to become mega rich, famous and super successful. **Ironically, in the end, you will realize that even this "real life" of yours was ultimately no different from that dream.**

So, maybe, instead of buying into societal programming and worrying and feeling guilty about how much your leisure time is distracting you from

your “oh so important” work time (maybe because your employers have made you believe that you are saving the universe?) perhaps what you should really be accounting for is how much your work time is devouring into your leisure time, that will never ever come back?

So, what am I ULTIMATELY getting at? Well, in science, there are something called a “First Principle”. A First principle basically means a fundamental fact about a specific thing that is unquestionably true and cannot be broken down further into more unquestionable truths. For example, the statement “Every action has an equal and opposite reaction” is a first principle of physics.

I propose that you should treat **Death as the first principle of your life.** Death is the only unquestionably true ending for all biological life that we can all agree on.

This is NOT limited to the old, often repeated Latin proverb, “Memento Mori”, which **means you should always remember you will die. It's a good start but it's not enough.**

The concept of death being a first principle goes beyond this. Not only should you remember that you will die, you should ALSO remember that death is the **ONLY confirmed ending** for a biological organism.

Everything you believe about the world, about what will happen afterwards, is still ultimately a belief, which may or may not be a fact.

You may or may not go to heaven/hell.

You may or may not be born again.

You may or may not turn into an irritating ghost begging for rides on lonely roads.

But these are not undeniable truths everyone can agree on.

Speculation about everything else that happens after death lies in the realm of beliefs, theories and fantasies, and cannot be termed a confirmed truth.

In fact, Life and Death are both supremely irritating characters who like playing with us. **You never asked for life, but still get it, and when you don't want death, you get that.** But death is even more irritating. When you are so fed up with the everyday nonsense that you don't care if it comes, it usually wants nothing to do with you, and when things are finally better and you don't want it, death is suddenly knocking on your doors, saying "Yo man, it's time bro!"

Life is a Circus and we are the Clowns, who are both hired and fired, without us ever wanting it. But the funniest part is that we still spend our time in this circus trying to beat other clowns so that we can become senior clowns and clown in chiefs.

My buddy Schop, (**Arthur Schopenhauer**) wasn't exaggerating when he compared this whole circus to a prison.

Objectively speaking, for most living beings, life is indeed SIMILAR to a prison sentence they get without choice. Sure, you may get some good experiences from time to time to make you believe you have freedom of doing whatever you want or you may listen to some society/matrix approved "mentors" to fool you, err, I mean "motivate" you to believe that ANYONE can be whatever they want to be.

However, anyone with sufficient life experience and an open mind can eventually see that this freedom is largely an illusion.

When you secretly wish for a release from prison life because it's super hard, life's partner in crime, death ignores you and when you have finally made some friends, attained some status in that prison and started to actually enjoy prison life, **it suddenly says to you, "Tata, bye bye, good bye."** It also regularly throws your friends and family out, mostly against their wishes, making the prison unbearable again just when it finally became bearable.

Call me a pessimist, but the most well-known “pessimist” in the world was the Buddha, so my buddy Schop and I are in good company.

In fact, scientific advancements may lead to a day where you could become immortal in terms of avoiding old age but, that won't protect you against accidents, war, murder etc.

So, you are never practically going to be immortal as a biological being – sorry mate.

And it's a good thing. **Life has a meaning because life has an end.**

Why would you want to be immortal anyway?

What do you get?

More bad bosses?

More crappy jobs?

Never ending interference from innumerable generations of toxic people.?

Watching all your loved ones go away and feeling the pain of them going away over and over again?

Furthermore.

The world will get crazier and crazier. If you think the world is bad in 2024, wait a hundred years.

By the way, immortality doesn't guarantee good health (or good skin). For all you know you maybe a shrivelled up immortal 1000-year-old with severe arthritis and bladder issues. Maybe, you will start looking like Gollum from The Lord of the Rings, who knows?

Humans or other non-biological beings will continue to evolve, and yet because you don't evolve, and eventually your position amongst them would not be too different from a chimpanzee today amongst humans,

even if you are their respected "ancestor". Naturally, you are probably going to eventually be forcibly kept in some zoo or some museum.

You may eventually escape that zoo when everyone around you dies, but you will still have a lot of painfully slow and boring days ahead of you as you will outlive all living beings and **wait alone** for billions of years for the end of the earth. Then when the sun fries the earth, you will be burnt badly, but you will still live as you are immortal.

Maybe then you will drift over the universe, experiencing an infinite number of things and infinite number of times, until you are infinitely exhausted. But it's not going to be over. You will still have to wait for possibly trillions of years more, alone, for the end of time itself.

**If you suffer too much, at least you are eventually relieved of it.
Imagine a world where the suffering never ends but the perpetual existence remains.**

You are worried about an eternal hell after death? An immortal life IS THAT eternal hell.

Society has programmed all of us to believe that death is always a terrible thing. **But maybe nature already knows the pitfall of an immortal life and gives us eventual death to free us from eternal suffering?**

Because you see, life is much like welcoming a new season of the year - Generally enjoyable when it happens for a sufficient but limited duration, uncomfortable when it lasts for way too long and believe it or not, utterly dreadful if it goes on forever.

"Death is best of all things, and of all rewards that humankind can receive, the greatest, for death marks the end of all the miseries we endured in life, and an escape from all the miseries that will be suffered by those who go on living." – Cicero

Too morbid? Let's cheer you up.

Look at the bright side of mortality – you don't have to worry about food and rent anymore!

By the way, if I were immortal, I'd end up writing a million books (and force everyone, from humans to AI to Aliens to read them.) I am sure no one wants to read a million rants from me.

Frankly, I hope reincarnation isn't a truth either because, to be honest, I hate school and I wish I don't have to go through it again and again for eternity.

But if reincarnation is a reality, and I do end up in this circus again, then I sincerely hope that I can read my own book as soon as possible, so at least I am better prepared to deal with all the nonsense this time around.

Woah!! I just realized I gamed nature by creating an insurance for myself, if I do end up having another life!

This is a first in the history of reincarnations! Genius! I am going to add this in the Dedication segment.

But sadly, here is what is more likely, the books I write will probably be forgotten, and when I come back, motivational bros like Sir Hapoleon Nil (author of the inspirational comedy, Don't Think, Just Grow Thick) and his minions will continue to sell millions of copies of their books and screw up my next life as well.

Legend says, that even hundreds of years from now an incarnation of mine will still be getting screwed over by these motivational bros.

So, please preserve my books and save my future incarnations!

Oh, by the way, if I die and there is indeed a heaven and I get to know from an angel spy that the likes of Thomas Eddy's Son and Sir Happy Nil are chilling there somewhere, I promise I will ally with my buddy Schop, track them down, and threaten to smack them at least once on behalf of all of humanity

Okay, enough, let's get serious again.

Now, I am NOT going to pretend to be some evolved being and claim I don't fear my own death or that of my loved ones or that death is necessarily something to look forward to, particularly when it comes when you are not prepared.

I am not going to pretend that the process of dying is not often painful, scary or even traumatic. It is, for most beings, just like it was for Tobi.

So don't hold it against me if I eventually face my end with less courage than I seemingly exhibit in this writing.

Because the reason I have written is only to remind you and also remind myself that every single "society dictated goal" in life is frivolous in the face of death.

And the biggest tragedy would be if we in the process of striving for and achieving these goals in life, ultimately forgot LIVING life itself.

Because here is a fact about this phenomenon called life.

It is true that the world is suffering. But the world is NOT ONLY suffering. It is true that the world gives you pain, but it is not true that the world ONLY gives you pain

The key to a reasonably enjoyable life is then not to necessarily completely reject maya, but paradoxically enjoying Maya while being aware that it is an illusion.

In Philosophy there is something called nihilism or the idea that everything is ultimately meaningless. Unfortunately, the more scientific phenomenon is discovered, the more it seems that ultimately a lot of things seem to be meaningless.

Evolution seems to have no specific goal, at least as of current knowledge. There is no apparent divine reason why life evolved on earth, and most supernatural phenomena, previously attributed to God, is slowly finding logical explanations.

You see, the primary problem with idea of a nihilistic or ultimately pointless universe, isn't that the idea itself isn't plausible. **It very well could be the way things actually are.**

The problem is that if the average person were to subscribe to this idea on an everyday basis, they would not have any good reason to live out their entire lives in this meaningless prison anymore.

So, what's the way forward? I think you should treat life like the way you enjoy a movie.

You know the movie isn't really real, yet you enjoy it anyway? Why? because even though you know it is fake, you lie to yourself to enjoy the experience. And truthfully this is the only way to enjoy the experience.

Now if you became so deluded as to believe that everything about the movie is real, that would be a problem too!

Just like seeing the "**behind the scenes**" footage immediately after a movie often ruin the emotional impact of the movie, being too aware of the "truth" all the time, will ruin the impact of the movie called our life.

The sweet spot for a meaningful and enjoyable everyday human existence then is probably somewhere in between – Not TOO ATTACHED. Not TOO DETACHED.

So, YOU CAN and SHOULD ENJOY the Maya (illusions) that doesn't hurt you, after all you have the right to enjoy existence as much as you want. Just don't get SO attached to them that you destroy your peace of mind over them.

Many of the things I talk about in this book should be taught in schools to kids from a relatively young age. If it was done, people's lives would be a lot better or at least they would have a lot more clarity. **But that is never going to happen.** Because the goal of the current formal education system is to serve the system, not make the individuals life better.

The irony is you are not only trained to be a mindless slave and you are also charged boatloads of money and forced to go into debt to become a mindless slave! How wonderful! The perfect definition of a happy and successful life!

Here is a choice you have though. If the school isn't going to teach your kids on this essential knowledge, it is your obligation to teach it to your kids before it is too late.

Teach it to your kids, teach it to young people, because their minds aren't rigid yet. It's not just doing them a favor to help them get rid of the brainwashing they grow up with that sets them up for failure. You also are doing yourself a favor, because as a natural consequence of teaching this, your own life will become easier.

At the very least, remember this and teach this to them.

There are two kinds of games on life. **The first kind are zero sum games where for one to win the other has to lose.** Most games of the outer world such success, fame, tremendous wealth are all zero-sum games.

The other game is one where for one to win the other doesn't have to lose, it's possible for everyone to be a winner. This is squarely the domain of games such as reasonable financial independence, mental peace, self-awareness, contentment, compassion and so on. It is theoretically possible for everyone to possess the same.

But It is IMPOSSIBLE for everyone to be famous, be super rich or super successful and most will never be.

MOST outer world games are the ones where no matter how motivated one is, 99 percent of the players will only be filled with frustration, regret and disappointment at the end, because that is the nature of the game.

So, ask them to choose their games wisely.

Also, ask them to live by compassionate individualism, because if they don't care for themselves, no one ever will.

They need to put themselves first but they also need to be compassionate towards the world around them.

But first, be compassionate to yourself if you want to be compassionate to others.

Ask them to remember that conventional wisdom will tell you that you are being lazy if you are not working every single hour of the day, however conventional wisdom was never for your benefit anyway.

If you are a diver without oxygen, who wishes to explore the ocean, remember you cannot remain underwater perpetually. You need to come back up from the depths you want to explore so intently, so that you can get a gasp of fresh air and then go back exploring again.

Those who do not come up from time to time and always wish to work in those depths will only end up drowning themselves and perhaps NEVER get a chance to come back up ever again. These words of caution may use the metaphor of the diver but if you are "**drowning" yourself in work**, they are really meant for you.

Teach them that once they have understood their strengths, they may not have to necessarily work more than others **but they do have to LEARN more than others**. And learning anything is only fun when you enjoy it in the first place.

Ask them to remember, **only fools express vanity over things gifted to them by fate or chance. And most people are fools, including you and me at times.**

Ask them to not tie their complete sense of self-worth to things that are anyway beyond their control, because unless they are extremely lucky, that will only lead to a life of disappointment and disillusionment.

Ask them to remember, that things often come and go on their own. You can't force the seasons to change when you want them to, they will change on their own when it is time, the only thing you can do is switch on the thermostat and wear appropriate clothes.

Ask them to remember: The foolish see life as a competition where outcomes can be fully controlled. The smart see life as a game where you can manipulate probabilities to improve your chances. But the truly wise neither OVERLY OBSESS about controlling outcomes, nor about manipulating probabilities. They just laugh at the absurdity of it all and play the game just for fun!

Ask them to not get so trapped by rigid ideologies that they destroy their lives and own relationships with those they love in the name of those ideologies.

If you dig yourself too deep into a single space, eventually you'll start thinking that space is the only reality because you can't see anything else. **That's why it's so important to come out of that hole every now and then**, explore other caves, dig other holes, and stare at the skies, so you don't confuse that narrow space for the ultimate truth. Your rigid beliefs are that same narrow space that you love so much you refuse to see there could be an entire universe beyond them.

Finally, teach them to challenge everything from time to time, including what is written in this book, and seek to explore their truths for themselves instead of solely relying on a single person or group's opinion as the entire map for their life.

My final message is to you though - All your life you have lived for society. You have lived for your relatives, your employer, your parents, your spouse, your community, your country and even your dead ancestors, because that is what you have been told is the right thing to do.

One fine day, your life is going to end, and you are going to finally realize, you have lived for everyone, except yourself.

So, start living for yourself also, once in a while, before it is too late.

Here is a reminder: If you are worrying about things you wouldn't give a damn about if you only had a few months to live, you are worrying about the wrong things.

As for me, why am I writing? I write because I want to contribute to future generations, in whatever little way I can, to make their lives a little less painful, based on the best use of the talents and experiences nature gave me.

I am not doing it to be famous or worthy in the eyes of the world.

I am not doing it to be worthy in the eyes of parents or teachers.

I am not even doing it to be worthy in the eyes of "God."

I am not doing it for the "Selfish Gene" which apparently wants to hitch a ride on me.

I am doing it for this life to be worth it, in my own eyes.

I am doing it to find meaning in non-meaning.

Because here is what our brutal world ultimately is:

A tiny blue dot circling a star, that is one of the billions of stars in a galaxy that itself is one of the billions of galaxies in a universe, that itself could be one amongst billions of universes.

Don't take this world too seriously and enjoy the ride.



"Look again at that dot. That's home. That's us. On it, everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives.

The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every 'superstar,' every 'supreme leader,' every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there—on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam."

- Carl Sagan

Tobu and I, from a long time ago



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